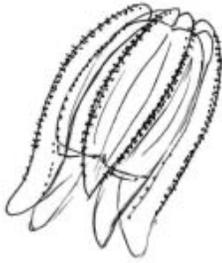


N.C. Plant and Animal Species Fact Sheets



Comb Jelly (*Mnemiopsis spp.*)

Introduction

If you look into the sound in the evening and see flashes of light you may be looking at a comb jelly or ctenophora (the phylum name) using cilia to move through the water. Chemical reactions in their bodies make the light, phosphorescence. They only have a little control over their movements so it not unusual to see them on the beach, left stranded by the high tide.

What do they look like?

Although they look like jellyfish they are a different kind of animal. They are made of the same kind of jelly but they tend to be round in shape with only a few tentacles. They appear to have up and down stripes made of fused cilia (look like eyelashes) that are their comb plates for filtering food. They swim upside down with their mouth pointing up.

How big are they?

Most of the comb jellies found in our estuaries and ocean are from 0.25-5 inches (0.64-12.7 cm)

Where do they live?

Our comb jellies live in the salty parts of the estuary and ocean. They live in the water

column as a permanent part of the zooplankton. In other places comb jellies are bottom dwellers or live symbiotically on corals.

Who eats them?

Comb jellies are eaten by jellyfish, fish, and sea turtles.

What do they eat?

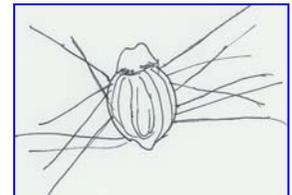
Comb jellies eat small planktonic organisms like larval clams, copepods, amphipods.

How do they mate?

Ctenophores are monoecious which means that both sexes are in one animal. They release their eggs and sperm from their mouth into the water.

What are the young like?

Their cydippid larva are released directly from the eggs.



The cydippid larva is very similar to the adult.

People Interactions

People are often scared of ctenophores because of they resemble jelly fish. They do not use poison to catch their prey relying on sticky tentacles to do that.

EstuaryLive

www.EstuaryLive.org

North Carolina National Estuarine Research Reserve

www.ncnerr.org or tel. 252.728.2170

Albemarle-Pamlico National Estuary Program

<http://www.apnep.org/> or tel. 252.946.6481

Carolina Estuarine Reserve Foundation

www.cerf.us



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