GEORGIA AQUARIUM ANIMAL FACT SHEET

Moon jelly

Aurelia aurita

Range/Habitat

- The moon jellyfish is found worldwide in temperate areas.
- It inhabits surface waters, often over reefs and along all coastal shores.

Physical Characteristics

- This jellyfish has main parts that include a bell-shaped dome that can reach two feet (61 centimeters) in diameter with numerous short, fringe-like tentacles around its margins.
- In open water the tentacles are extended and hang down like a veil. Four-leaf-clover-shaped reproductive organs can be seen through its translucent dome.
- It also has four frilly oral arms, which are not always obvious.
- A moon jelly is whitish in color, often shaded with pink or blue.

Diet/Feeding

- It feeds primarily on zooplankton.
- Food is also collected on the upper and lower surfaces of the dome where cilia carry it, entrapped in mucus, to the margin. Here it collects in small pockets, where the food is removed by the tips of four long, arms that then transfer the food to the mouth.

Conservation Status

It is not on the IUCN Red List.

Additional Information

- It is the most commonly washed up jellyfish on beaches.
- They are the main food for leatherback sea turtles and other marine creatures. Many animals die every year ingesting floating plastic bags mistaken for moon jellies.
- Female eggs are fertilized internally by sperm released by the male.
- Embryos develop on special grooves in the adult female's arms.
- The moon jellies are true jellies; the body is filled with a jelly-like substance. It floats through the water, lacking the strength to navigate through currents. Despite its size, it is technically a member of plankton.

Sources

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Daniel W. Gotshall, <u>Guide To Marine Invertebrates</u>, <u>Alaska to Baja California (Sea Challengers</u>, 1994), p. 24

Eugene H. Kaplan, <u>Southeastern and Caribbean Seashores</u>, (Houghton Mifflin Company, 1988), p. 207