

# REEF TEACH TIMES

Welcome to the second edition of Reef Teach Times. We hope you will find the information contained in this newsletter useful as well as provide you with an insight into what is happening on the Great Barrier Reef (GBR) at this time of year. As the reef changes throughout the year and interesting events take place, we will endeavor to keep you up to date.

## THE SEA JELLIES ARE BACK!!!

As Summer is approaching, sea temperatures are warming. This makes October the start of the 2007 Jellyfish season along the Northern Queensland coast of Australia. Jellyfish are not fish. They are actually invertebrates, which means they do not have a backbone. Jellyfish are most recognised for their bell-like jelly shape and tentacles. Some jellyfish species can reach up to 2m across the bell and trail tentacles 30m behind them. Others are only the size of a thumb nail, with bodies that are so clear you can see right through them.

**The Box Jellyfish** (*Chironex fleckeri*), often called the sea wasp, is one of the most dangerous. It inhabits shallow coastal waters around northern Australia throughout the summer months between Oct-April. The **Irukandji** syndrome is a group of delayed (30 mins) severe symptoms occurring after an initial mild skin sting by small box jellyfish including *Carukia barnesi*, known colloquially as 'Irukandji', named after a Cairns aboriginal tribe. The syndrome can last from a few hours to a few days and varies in intensity. It begins with a mild sting which is followed by severe lower back pain, muscle cramps in the arms, legs, stomach and chest, sweating, anxiety, nausea, vomiting, headaches and palpitations. It has been known to cause cardiac failure.

**Jellyfish** drift at the mercy of the currents, often accumulating in sheltered bays and estuaries, and are more abundant after local rain. They swim using an unusual pumping action while their tentacles, which are covered in millions of stinging cells (nematocysts), drag along behind them as they move. Box jellyfish do not actively hunt, but rely on food bumping into them. This is how humans are accidentally stung when swimming or wading in shallow water. Jellyfish are extremely difficult to see as they are almost invisible in the water. When an animal (or human) comes into contact with the tentacles the stinging cells are triggered and fire hollow threads that pierce the victims skin allowing venom to enter.

### What can you do to prevent your clients from being stung???

Encourage everyone to wear protective clothing such as a stinger suit or wet suit. Most tour vessels have the suits available free to use, some may charge a small laundry fee. Stinger suits cover about 85% of your body. Obviously there is still a small chance of being stung in the non protected areas, but the risk is greatly reduced.

#### Other tips to encourage:

- Swim at protected beaches with safety nets
- Avoid swimming in the mouths of rivers and creeks
- Move slowly in the water. Splashing can increase the chance of tentacles touching your skin
- If stung, expose sting to household vinegar for at least 30 sec before seeking medical attention
- Attend a Reef Teach Session!!!

Until the next issue, take only pictures and leave only bubbles.

The Reef Teach Team.

“With learning comes appreciation.”



## REEF TEACH

Edition 2  
October 2007

## JELLY SEASON PREVENTION TIPS

## REEF TEACH SHOW

6.30 pm to 8.30 pm  
Monday to Saturday

