

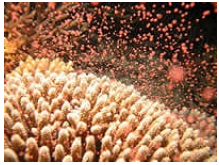
REEF TEACH TIMES

Edition 14 December 2011

Getting ready for that time of year again...summer has arrived with full force...water temperatures sizzling above 28 degrees...lot's of interesting 'happenings' on the reef...what more can we ask for.

Happy Holidays!!!

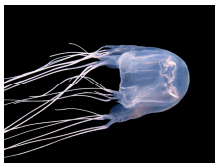
Coral spawning is the biggest orgy on the planet! On just a few nights of the year (usually 4-6 nights after the full moon in November) corals release huge clouds of eggs and sperm into the water. Chemical clues ensure the eggs only accept sperm from a different colony to prevent inbreeding. Mass spawning ensures there is better chance that at least a few of the **planula** (larva) will survive. Coral planula will swim for several days or weeks until they find somewhere to settle on, then they divide and clone themselves into multiple **polyps**, eventually forming a whole **colony**. Animals like sea stars, sea cucumbers, giant clams and some reef fish also spawn.



Other fish, like triggerfish, and Nemo's family, the anemonefish, are **nesters**, carefully guarding their eggs until they hatch. **Triggerfish** are highly aggressive during the nesting season, roughly November to February, and divers should give them a wide berth. Fortunately they don't know that your fins aren't part of your body, so if a triggerfish attacks you, just stick your fins between you and the fish!

Sea turtles also nest along the Great Barrier Reef between November and February. Females mate with several males over many weeks, storing sperm until they need it. It's a brutal affair – sometimes several males will pile on top of a single female, hanging on desperately with their flippers, sometimes even drowning the poor female in their frenzy to mate with her! Female **sharks** have a pretty rough time of it as well. The male shark bites onto the female's fins to hang on during mating. The skin of female sharks is much thicker than males - but you can often see the 'battle' scars around females fins!

One animal that isn't breeding yet is the **box jellyfish**. They have a roughly 12-month lifecycle, and the juveniles have been developing in the creeks for the last six months or so. **Stinger Season** officially starts on 1st November, but may begin earlier or later depending on when the first heavy rains of the wet season occur, which help to flush them out of the creeks and along the coast. In late summer, males will release sperm into the water to be absorbed by females to fertilise their eggs. The free-swimming **planula** develop into crawling **polyps** that attach themselves to rocks and roots in creeks. Like corals, they can divide and clone themselves into multiple polyps (but do not form colonies). As they mature they let go of the rocks and become free-swimming **medusa** (adult jellyfish) with up to 60 **tentacles** extending to 3-4m in length... covered in **nematocysts** (stinging cells) loaded with venom!



To end off, keep an eye out for our **dolphins** which you would probably see from the boat on the way out to the reef and back in. Just two days ago, we were lucky enough to spot some spinner dolphins during our drift dive on the Agincourt Reefs, what a sight. This is not something seen regularly, but this at least shows you that there are some amazing things to see off our reefs. Everyday is different on the Great Barrier Reef. So go out and enjoy but come and see our Reef Teach show first.

Holiday / Christmas Closing Dates

Best wishes for the Holiday Season to you all . We hope you have a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Reef Teach will be closed on Saturday, 31st December and our normal closing days (Sundays & Mondays).

Hope you all have a festive season and much joy and happiness to you all.

Thanks for the support....The team at Reef Teach!

For all bookings/enquiries please contact (07) 4031 7794 or email learn@reefteach.com.au

“With learning comes appreciation.”

2nd Floor, Mainstreet Arcade, 85 Lake St Tel: (07) 4031 7794 www.reefteach.com.au

REEF TEACH

6:30-8:30pm

Tuesday - Saturday

\$18 adults \$9 under 14

\$45.00 per family

Stinger Advice

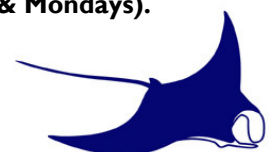
During the Stinger Season, **swimmers should only swim in stinger nets** at patrolled swimming beaches. Box jellies are rarely found more than a few kilometres offshore, but the jellies causing **Irukandji-syndrome** are found around reefs and well out to sea, so **divers and snorkelers should wear Lycra stinger suits or Neoprene wetsuits for protection**. Box jelly stings are extremely and immediately painful, but rarely fatal with proper treatment. However, the pain caused by Irukandji stings may take longer (typically 5-40 minutes) to develop and consequently stings may not be taken seriously at first. It is vital that **all suspected stings should be treated immediately**.

Treatment

Get the victim out of the water, **call for medical help** (dial 000 or 112 from mobiles), offer CPR and oxygen if needed, **flood the sting with vinegar ASAP**, and get the victim to hospital.

Looking for a great Book...

Come and have a look at our collection from 5:30pm Tues to Sat evenings. Or give us a call to arrange another time.



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GREAT BARRIER REEF AUSTRALIA