

# Sea Life of the Mar Menor - 2012 Update

There have been a number of articles recently regarding jellyfish nets in the Mar Menor. I'm sure many people will be glad to see their arrival. I would however just like to put in a few words in favour of the jellyfish, as they are an essential part of the Mar Menor's eco system.

Due to rainwater run off from the surrounding land and irrigation run off from the fields, nutrients are washed into the water. Due to the warmth of the water and the high nutrient content of the water, algae (tiny plants) and plankton (tiny animals) multiply in huge numbers. When water is full of algae and plankton it becomes green and murky, rather like pea soup. When the algae die, they drop to the bottom of the water and rot, they then turn into a black stinky gloop! However, jellyfish love to eat plankton and plankton love to eat algae, which keeps the situation under control.

Jellyfish enter the Mar Menor from the Mediterranean and find a warm sea full of food. They love it and multiply in large numbers (as you may have noticed). Most jellyfish are unable to swim well and are washed around by wind and tide.

The main problem that arises in the Mar Menor, is that the jellyfish have no

predators. It is said that sea turtle used to live in the Mar Menor and feed on the jellyfish, however this theory is unproven. The only jellyfish predator now is Man. Many are chopped up by boat engines or wash up on beaches and are buried by enthusiastic children. By far the largest number are fished out of the Mar Menor by the fishermen who are paid to do this by the council.

So when it comes down to it, because of the increased use of fertilizers and irrigation of crops there is a huge amount of algae and plankton. Because there is a huge amount of plankton there are a huge number of jellyfish and because there are a huge number of jellyfish with no predator the fishermen are kept busy during the summer months!

Over recent years increased numbers of jellyfish are being reported around the world, this increase is being linked to rising sea temperatures and over-fishing. Please see this article for further details <http://www.emagazine.com/daily-news/rise-of-the-jellyfish>

There are two main types of jellyfish to be found in the Mar Menor; Bell Jellyfish are normally found in the Mar Menor from

June-Sept and Cassiopeia from July-October, however due to rising sea temperatures they are here for longer and longer each year! My information on these jellyfish and their stings comes from first hand experience as I work in the water every day.



**Cassiopeia**  
"Fried Egg Jellyfish"  
*Cothyloriza tuberculata*

**Size:** up to 40cm  
Creamy yellow bell top  
Tentacles terminate in purple spots  
**Sting:** none, most people unaffected unless skin is broken

They are completely harmless and can be picked up without a problem.



**Bell Jellyfish**  
*Rhizostoma octopus*

**Size:** normally up to 50cm (can be larger)  
Creamy white with purple rim to bell  
**Sting:** ranges from mild to medium  
Depending on the size of the jellyfish and the sensitivity of your skin.  
Mild-like a nettle sting  
Medium-a burning stinging sensation

**Treatment of Jellyfish Stings:** apply white vinegar or "After Bite", which is available from a pharmacy. Do not wash jellyfish stings with fresh water or it will make them worse. Discomfort should be reduced significantly within 5 mins of treatment.

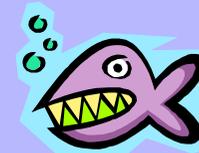
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