



# Marine Stinger Management Newsletter

Vol. 2. No. 10/11

October/November 2006

## In this Issue

	Page
Editor's note .....	2
Mark the date: Calendar of upcoming events .....	2
Risk Management Solutions Forum – 22 <sup>nd</sup> Nov .....	3
Upcoming seminars and workshops .....	4
Blue-ring octopus safety .....	5
Where to find out more information .....	6



The life of the beach.





## Stinger season has begun

While many people regard November 1<sup>st</sup> as the “official start of stinger season”, the jellyfish do not read calendars but instead respond to various environmental conditions, regardless of whether it seems logical to us. We have already seen several Irukandji stings in the colder months this year, and several reported more recently. There is no evidence that this apparent earlier-than-normal activity is due to global warming, or due to species mutations, or any other environmental perturbation – it is probably due to better reporting and simple yearly fluctuation.

At the beginning of October, a 3 year old boy was bitten by a blue-lined octopus near Brisbane (related to the blue-ring octopus). The severity of the situation was recognised early, and while having to spend the night on life support, the child made a full recovery.

In order to put jellyfish into a broader perspective of marine dangers, we will periodically highlight a different creature with facts and safety tips. In the last newsletter, we took a look at stingrays, and this issue we look at the timely and fascinating blue-ring octopus.

The stinger seminar “road show” has been a raging success! I am humbled by the number of people and organisations that are embracing stinger safety as part of an overall effort to provide visitors with a safe and enjoyable experience.

Dr. Lisa-ann Gershwin – Editor, Marine Stinger Management Newsletter  
National Marine Stinger Advisor – Surf Life Saving  
Mob. 0409 627 869 – Email: [lisa.gershwin@jcu.edu.au](mailto:lisa.gershwin@jcu.edu.au)

### Mark the Date: Calendar

- 22 November 2006: Marine Stinger Risk Management Forum in Cairns; if you or your organisation would like to arrange to speak or attend, please contact the Marine Stinger Coordinator, Dr. Lisa-ann Gershwin 0409 627 869

### Did you know...

An Irukandji sting often sweats profusely at the site of the sting, and this may be the only indication of the sting before the illness onsets.

Strangely enough, red-back spiders produce a similar sweating at the injury site.



# Marine Stinger Management Newsletter

## Risk Management Strategic Forum 22<sup>nd</sup> Nov - Cairns

To compliment the Marine Stinger Risk Management Forum that was held in Townsville recently, a similar event is scheduled for Cairns. Please note that this will not be an information seminar; instead, this will focus on reducing stings in a balanced and mutually beneficial way for all stakeholders.

One of the primary highlights to come from the seminars and workshops conducted so far is a clear understanding of the need for the smaller operators and remote stakeholders to have a voice. Specifically, many of the remote and smaller organisations have had to struggle through lack of information or sometimes even mis-information. All organisations, both large and small, remote and metropolitan, have specific insights into what has been working for them and what has not. To bring together this seed bank of insights and ideas, Surf Life Saving is conducting a solutions-driven forum for 22nd November in Cairns.

### **Synopsis schedule:**

- 9am – Noon: Series of 5-10 min talks from people at the coal face about what is working and what is not, and where the gaps are
- 1pm – 4pm: Roundtable open discussion to create a mud-map to get to where we want to be in terms of stinger management in 5 years time

### **The over-arching objectives of the forum are to:**

- Listen to the needs and lessons of the people at the coal face
- Identify priorities
- Draft a mud-map for the next 5 years

If you have insights, ideas, concerns, or any sort of input or feedback about how stingers have been managed or should be managed in the local or broader sense, this forum is the place for you to have a voice.

### **Who should consider coming to this forum:**

- Tourism RTO's, reef operators, hotel operators, island resort managers
- Local government representatives
- Doctors and nurses working with envenomed patients
- Ambulance officers
- Surf Life Savers
- Fisheries and research professionals

If you are interested in attending, please contact Lisa Gershwin 0409 627 869



## Seminars & Workshops

An intensive schedule of seminars and workshops is currently in progress, with the goal of meeting with as many people as possible who want to know more about stingers or seek information on developing improved stinger management practises. Please contact the Marine Stinger Coordinator: 0409 627 869.

So far, the marine stinger “road show” has been to Great Keppel Island, Agnes Water, Gladstone, Calliope, Rockhampton, Yeppoon, Emu Park, Mackay, Sarina, Proserpine, Airlie Beach, Daydream Island, Long Island, Hamilton Island, Hayman Island, Bowen, Home Hill, Ayr, Townsville, Ingham, Cardwell, Kennedy, Tully, and Mission Beach

### What's next:

- Nov 2nd week: Tully / Mission Beach / Innisfail / Kurramine
- Nov 3rd week: Cairns / Port Douglas / Mossman / Daintree
- Nov 4th week: Cape: Cooktown / Thursday Isl. / Bamaga
- Dec 1st week: Gulf: Weipa / Aurukun / Karumba / Mornington Isl.
- Dec 2<sup>nd</sup> week: Dunk Isl. and other places missed earlier

### **In each city or town, the currently anticipated schedule is:**

Morning lectures:	Afternoon workshops/meetings:
school 1	tourism / local govt focus
school 2	ambulance / hospital / clinic focus

Evening:  
public seminar or resort personnel

Weekend:  
Surf Life Saving Clubs

### Open time slots still exist in most regions

### **What we need from you:**

- Please tell us if you would like to arrange a meeting with your organisation
- Please tell us what information is the most important to you



## BLUE RING OCTOPUSES



### The Animals

- These small octopuses are found all around the Australian coast.
  - They are members of the phylum Mollusca, along with snails and slugs.
  - They are remarkably common but are shy and well camouflaged when the blue rings are “switched off”.
  - Adults are generally less than 15cm across the spread-out arms.
  - The various species may have blue rings or bars. When the animal is undisturbed these are barely visible.
  - The beautiful blue markings may make the animal more attractive for humans to attempt handling them
  - The correct plural of octopus is ‘octopus’ or ‘octopuses’ rather than ‘octopi’.
- Blue-ringed octopuses are very shy and are non-aggressive to humans. Bites almost only occur when they are handled.
- Venom is in the saliva, and is injected when the animal bites.
- The venom is used for immobilising prey such as crabs.

### Safety and First Aid

- ‘Leave octopuses alone’ is the single most important rule to avoid envenomation. It is particularly important to emphasise this to children playing around rock pools
- The bite may be painless or nearly so.
  - The venom causes paralysis, and death or brain damage may occur from loss of the ability to breathe.
  - The onset of paralysis may be as soon as 10 minutes after the bite.
  - Before paralysis ensues there may be a period of nausea and numbness
  - The patient may be completely paralysed (including the pupils) but be completely aware of the surroundings
  - ***With timely assisted respiration complete recovery is very likely. First aid, including CPR if necessary, and early 000 call are of lifesaving importance.***
- First Aid in suspected Blue Ringed Octopus bite:
  - Apply Pressure-Immobilisation
  - Monitor ABCs and support as soon as required. Inability to breathe is likely to occur.
  - Call 000 as soon as possible.

For the Interested: A great reference on this is “Venomous and Poisonous Marine Animals” by Williamson, Fenner and others.

Text by Michael Corkeron, Townsville Hospital ICU (and North Barrier Branch Marine Stinger Officer)

Photo by Amber Hansen



## What's coming in future issues?

In upcoming issues, we will look at topics including:

- What's all the buzz about Magnesium?
- More on the changes to the marinestingers.com website
- Why aren't compression bandages used any longer?
- Are stingers and stings increasing?
- Where to box jellies and Irukandjis go in the winter?

### Did you know...

There are currently at least 10 species of Irukandjis.....

The first-identified species of Irukandji jellyfish is *Carukia barnesi*, discovered in 1961 at Palm Cove and Ellis Beach, and formally named and classified in 1967.

Four more species of Irukandjis were named and classified in Dec 2005: *Carukia shinju* from Broome, *Malo maxima* from Broome, *Alatina mordens* from the Outer Reef off Cairns, and *Gerongia rifkinae* from Darwin.

At least 5 more species are known and awaiting classification from northern Queensland, Brisbane region, northern New South Wales, Dampier and Ningaloo Reef. Other species are believed to still exist unknown from other parts of the world, including the Caribbean, North Wales in the U.K., southeast Asia, and the Bass Strait.

### Where to get more information

Emergency sting information .....	000
Reports of stings or specimens .....	24/7: 0409 627 869
General safety information .....	SLSQ (07) 3846 8000
General jellyfish information .....	SLSQ (07) 3846 8000
Media enquiries .....	SLSQ (07) 3846 8044
Signage enquiries .....	SLSQ (07) 3846 8020
Requests for brochures, posters, etc .....	SLSQ (07) 3846 8000
Requests for speaking engagements .....	Coord. 0409 627 869
Research info or project ideas .....	Coord. 0409 627 869
Contributions to newsletter .....	<a href="mailto:lisa.gershwin@jcu.edu.au">lisa.gershwin@jcu.edu.au</a>
Add to mailing list .....	<a href="mailto:lisa.gershwin@jcu.edu.au">lisa.gershwin@jcu.edu.au</a>

<http://www.reef.crc.org.au/publications/brochures/Moreinformation.htm>

<http://www.marinestingers.com.au/marinestingers/default.htm>

Marine Stinger Management Newsletter copyright Surf Life Saving Queensland 2006

### If stung

by Irukandji / box jellyfish:

1. Call for help (dial '000' or send someone for a lifeguard)
2. Treat the victim (Provide emergency care - CPR if necessary)
3. Treat the sting (flood with vinegar)
4. Seek medical assistance