

Australian spotted jellyfish (*Phyllorhiza punctata*)

This invasive jellyfish was first reported in great numbers (as many as 2.3 million individuals in 1 km²) in the Gulf of Mexico in the summer of 2000. Such high abundance



and the large size of the jellyfish, up to 0.5 m (20") in diameter and more than 11 kg (25 lbs) in the Gulf population, concerns commercial trawl fishermen and biologists, alike. At these densities they prevented commercial fishing in certain areas. Following their initial appearance in the Gulf, the species was found over the next few years in much lower densities, from southwestern LA to Galveston Bay, TX. It was also found in 2002 in the Indian River Lagoon, on the FL

east coast, but not in great numbers. In 2007, however, densities in the Gulf were elevated once again, and the species was found along the east coast of the US, from northern FL to Morehead City, NC. Biologists are not certain if the jellyfish in the Atlantic come from the Gulf population, but they believe that the coincidental appearances may be related. Although they are considered to present little danger in terms of their sting, the ability of this jellyfish to consume plankton and the eggs and larvae of important fisheries species is cause for concern about their ecological impact. Lacking the symbiotic algae that are present in other described populations, the invasive populations appear to depend entirely on planktivory for their nutrition. Studies have shown that each animal can filter as much as 13,200 gallons of seawater per day.