



Sea Jelly Spectacular – Influence on China's Aquariums



Quallen-Spektakel – Einfluss auf die Schauaquarien Chinas

Suzanne M. Gendron*

Ocean Park Hong Kong, Wong Chuk Hang, Aberdeen, Hong Kong Island

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Abstract

Jellyfish are one of the oldest multi-organ animals found today; dating back at least 500 million years and some say even as many as 700 million years. There are even two or three that are considered immortal in that they can revert back to their polyp stage from the medusa stage. How amazing is that? But their increased prominence in our oceans is due to fishing down the food chain so that sea jellies have fewer predators and to the increased nutrients we are adding to our oceans via the rivers where the fertilizers and other chemical run off our land and into the water. Climate change is also affecting our sea jelly populations. Sea jellies are beautiful, graceful, elegant and mesmerizing and because of that, we have the opportunity to connect our visitors emotionally to our oceans and inspire the care and behaviour changes needed to help our oceans become healthy again.

Over the past 500-plus million years, these beautifully tetra-radial symmetrical jellies have diversified with over 200 scyphozoans, and possibly up to a couple of thousand hydrozoan species. They can live for only a few hours to six months in the wild, though in our aquariums, they have lived much longer. They have even diversified how they reproduce from asexual budding and fission to sexual reproduction, which makes our job of maintaining sustainable populations within our facilities all the more challenging, and no wonder these amazing jellies have fascinated us for decades.

Keywords: Jellyfish; Ocean Park Hong Kong; Kamo Aquarium Japan; conservation action

*Corresponding author.

E-mail address: suzanne.gendron@oceanpark.com.hk

Jellyfish husbandry in the Ocean Park Hong Kong, from the beginning to a big success

In my aquarist days, I do remember keeping the elegant and graceful moon jellies that still remain a staple of all jellyfish exhibits but so much has been learned since those early days. The advent of the kreisel tank by an UCLA Professor studying plankton revolutionized the display of jellyfish. Monterey Bay in the 1980s, created a beautiful temporary exhibit about sea jellies that stayed with them for many years and is still considered one of their most popular temporary exhibits.

Moon jellies came to Ocean Park’s Atoll Reef aquarium in Hong Kong in the early 2000’s (Fig. 1 & 2). Octopus jellies soon joined in another jewel aquarium. At that initial stage, with the animals and husbandry knowledge shared from Aquamarine Fukushima and Tokyo Sea Life Park, our team began to learn how to overcome the challenges in sea jelly husbandry and accumulated valuable experience.



Fig. 1. Entrance to the Jellyfish Exhibition. Photo: Hong Kong Ocean Park.

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