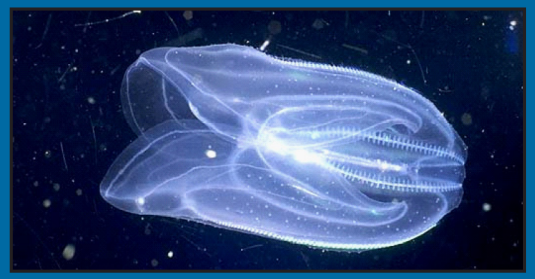
April 2011

Invasive Species of the Month

Leidy's Comb Jelly (*Mnemiopsis leidyi*)



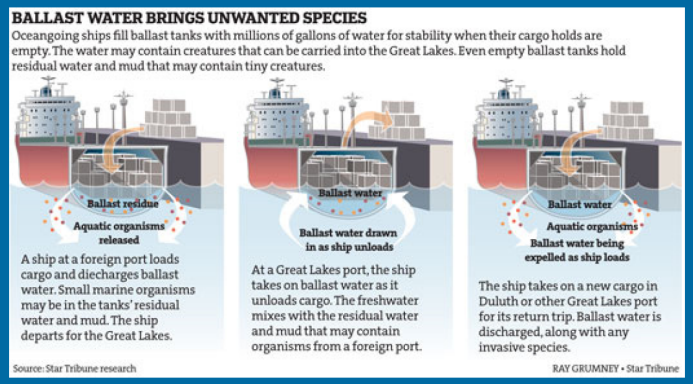
Leidy's comb jelly.

What? Leidy's comb jelly are jellyfish-like organisms that have a lobed, oval-shaped and transparent body, with four rows of "ciliated" combs that run along the body vertically. Leidy's glow blue-green when disturbed. Unlike cnidarians (marine invertebrates such as anemones, jellyfish, and corals that have stinging cells), Leidy's comb jelly doesn't sting. Leidy's is a major carnivorous predator of edible zooplankton, pelagic fish eggs and larvae, and has been associated with crashes in fishery populations when introduced in new locations.

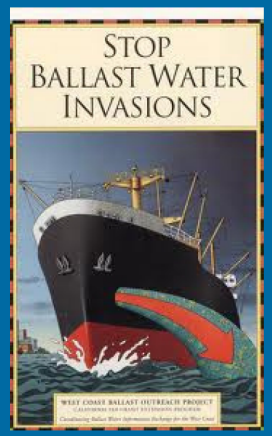
Where? Leidy's comb jelly are native in temperate to subtropical inshore waters of North and South America, and are common in southern New England in late summer to early fall, with occasional sightings in the winter. In the 1980s, this species was unintentionally introduced in the Black Sea via ballast water where it ate eggs and larvae of pelagic fish, causing a dramatic drop in fish populations, notably the commercially important anchovy, by competing for the same food sources. In 1999, the species was introduced in the Caspian Sea, resulting in a depletion of 75% of the zooplankton, and affecting the entire food chain of the lake. By 2006, the species spread throughout the Mediterranean basin and the northwestern Atlantic and the Baltic Sea.

Lookalike? One look-alike to the comb jellyfish is *Beroe forskalii*, the comb jelly predator. The difference between a comb jellyfish and a common jellyfish is that Leidy's comb jelly does not have stinging cells and are bell-shaped with no tentacles. Other jellyfish have a dome shape with hanging tentacles.

The look-alike and predator of Leidy's comb jelly, *Beroe forskalii*.



For more information on ballast water and invasive species, see http://water.epa.gov/type/oceb/habitat/invasive_species_factsheet.cfm



What can you do?

Be on the lookout for Leidy's comb jelly in Oregon's estuaries, and report suspected invaders to www.oregoninvasiveshotline.org or 1-866-INVADER.

Support best management practices for ballast water management to prevent the introduction and spread of invasive species, such as Leidy's comb jelly. Ballast water is a major source for introducing non-native species into aquatic ecosystems where they would not otherwise be present. If the non-native species become established, they can adversely impact the economy or the environment, or cause harm to human health.