

CTENOPHORA (Comb Jellies)

These are a small group of extremely delicate, pelagic animals superficially resembling the jelly-fish but differing from them in several ways. There are no stinging cells in the tentacles and they are propelled through the water by the beating of minute "swimming paddles" which are ciliated bands known as comb rows. Eight of these bands radiate vertically round the body, each being made up of short plates of cilia fused together at the attached end and known as combs. As the beating combs diffract the light, they appear brilliantly iridescent in sunlight and so are easily recognized as Ctenophores, as distinct from the jelly fish with their pulsating swimming bells. At night there is an intense luminescence along the combs. These animals are so fragile it is almost impossible to handle or preserve them. Whilst several species are known to occur in the Indo-Pacific waters, little is known about them.

Preparation

To prepare for this lesson, read the corresponding section in *The Encyclopedia of Recreational Diving*.

Field Handbooks

Few handbooks deal with these small and inconspicuous creatures. If you want pictures of Ctenophores from your area, look in *Tropical Pacific Invertebrates* (Jesper has the CD) or *Coral Reef Animals of the Indo-Pacific*.

Questions/Assignments

No question or assignments.