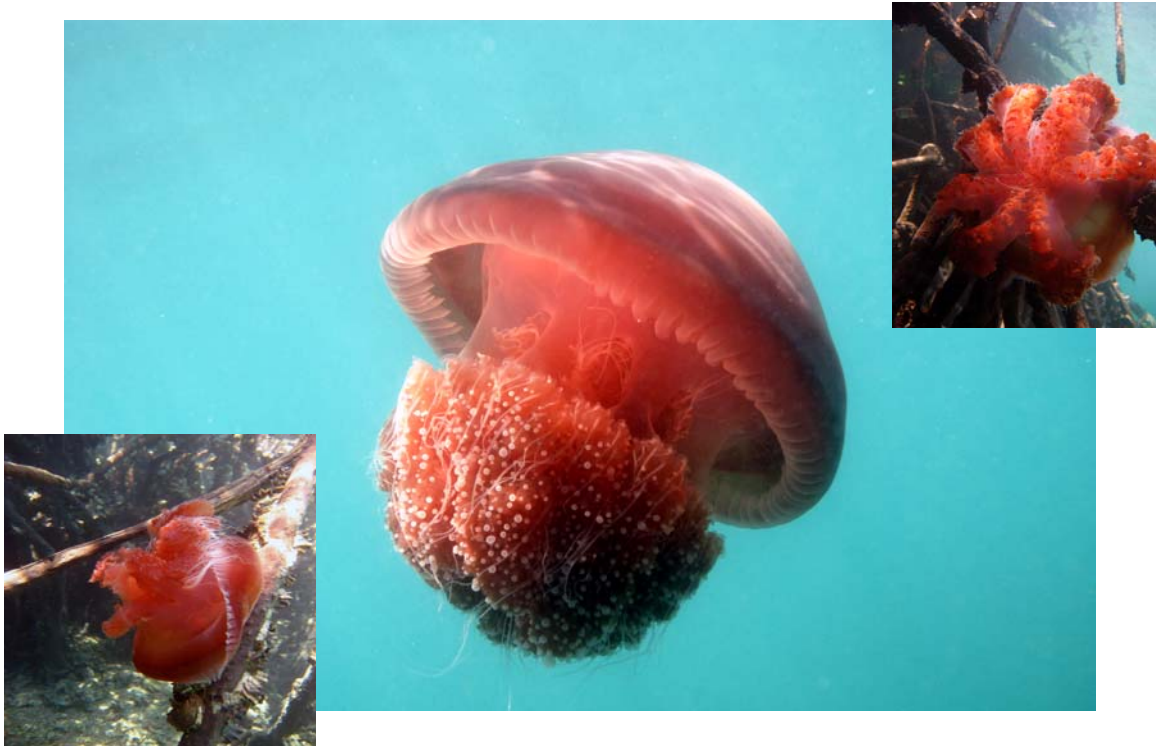


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MARINE BIOTA OF THE MONTH – DECEMBER 2007



Crambione mastigophora

These edible jellyfish have been known to occur in their thousands along Western Australia's coastline. Blooms of this tropical species - called a 'smuck' - have been reported in the proposed Dampier Archipelago Marine Park, Ningaloo Marine Park and as far south as the Perth metropolitan area.

Jellyfish diets are usually composed of small fish and tiny plankton found throughout the water column. Turtles, fish and birds however feed on jellyfish and are *Crambione mastigophoras'* main predator.

This jellyfish is reddish purple when alive and can reach a diameter of up to 400mm. *C. mastigophora* have many tentacles with stinging cells (nematocysts). Human contact with the nematocysts will cause an uncomfortable sting, but is not deadly.

C. mastigophora is native to the Malay Archipelago, Java and Truk Island. A spike in numbers of this species in Indonesia is a result of optimal environmental conditions. Smucks in Asian waters are transported south to Western Australia on the famous Leeuwin Current, which results in the large numbers of *C. mastigophora* found along our coastline.