

## PRESS RELEASE

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### JELLYFISH MONITORING PROJECT WITH THE HELP OF CITIZENS

The Oceanography Centre of the University of Cyprus like every year for the past three years, urges citizens to contribute to the effort of recording jellyfish in our seas and monitoring their fluctuating populations, within the frame of the "JellyWatch" project. Cyprus, among 21 other countries, participates through the Oceanography Centre in the "JellyWatch" project (<http://www.ciesm.org/marine/programs/jellywatch.htm>). This project aims to record the species of jellyfish that can be found in Mediterranean and Black Seas and their populations which show an increasing trend in their frequency in recent decades. It is worth noting that until last year, only 10 Mediterranean countries participated in the project and the monitoring of Jellyfish covered only the Mediterranean Sea. This year, the project was extended to the Black Sea and the number of countries participating in this effort doubled. This shows the growing interest there is for these organisms, who through the increase of their populations affect important sectors of the economy, such as fisheries, aquaculture and the tourism, as well as, the health of citizens. Moreover, increased interest exists for countries to investigate the causes of the increase of jellyfish populations. Anthropogenic impacts play an important role in the increasing occurrence of jellyfish blooms. Climate change, introduction of non-indigenous species, construction of breakwaters, which constitute the necessary substrate for the development of polyps (sessile stage of jellyfish life cycle), overfishing and eutrophication, all affect the increase of jellyfish populations to varying degrees.

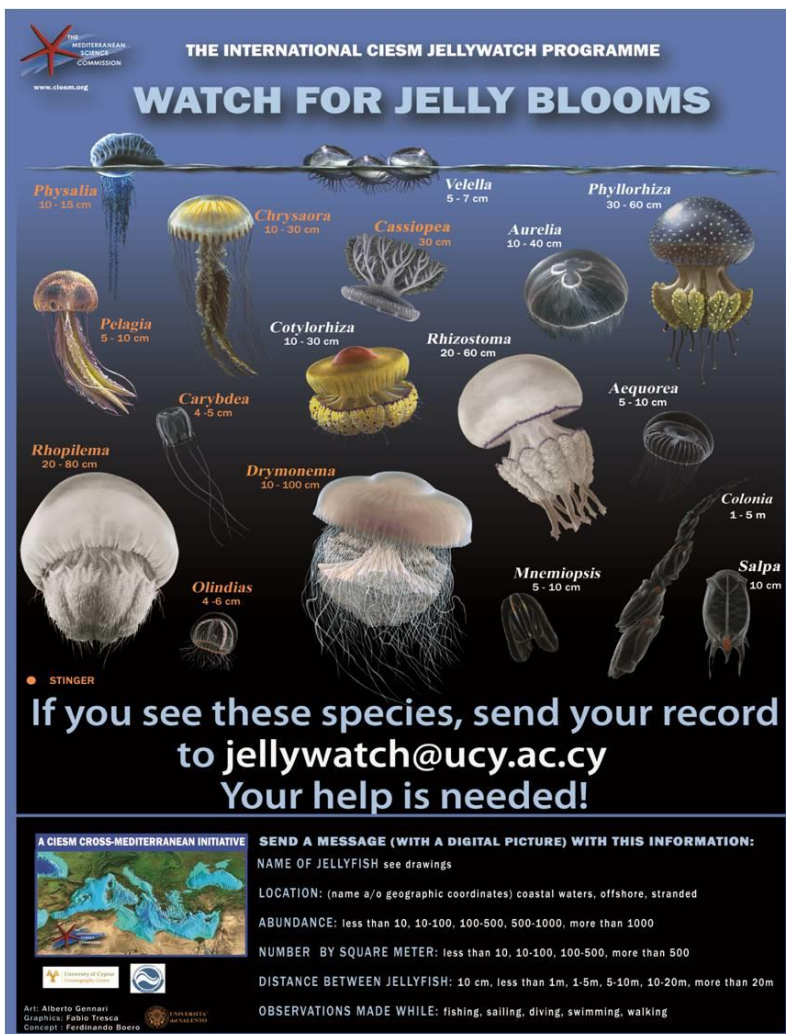
The main feature of the "JellyWatch" program is that for the recording of jellyfish using "citizen science". Citizens (swimmers, tourists, leisure boat owners, etc) together with agencies and organized groups associated with the sea, such as: diving centers, professional and amateur fishermen, and non-governmental organizations, are called upon to assist in reporting species of jellyfish that exist in our seas. The Oceanography Center has undertaken a difficult task, since Cyprus has 648km of shoreline and a total area of 130,766 km<sup>2</sup> of sea surface under Cyprus jurisdiction. For this reason, the contribution of citizens in the identification and recording of jellyfish, either as isolated individuals, or in observing the jellyfish bloom phenomenon is valuable.

Therefore if you spot an isolated individual of jellyfish or groups of jellyfish with the characteristics of the species that are on the poster provided by the Oceanography Centre (Figure 1), it is very important to send a photograph, if available, and the following information to the email address of the Oceanography Center [jellywatch@ucy.ac.cy](mailto:jellywatch@ucy.ac.cy):

- Full name and telephone number of observer.
- Jellyfish name.
- Region (location or/and geographical coordinates): shore, shallow waters, open sea.

- Abundance: less than 10, 10-100, 100-500, 500-1000, more than 1000.
- Number by square meter: less than 10, 10-100, 100-500, more than 500.
- Distance between jellyfish: 10cm, less than 1m, 1-5m, 5-10m, 10-20m, more than 20m.
- How the observations were made: during fishing, boating/sailing, diving, swimming, walking on the shore, etc.

In the context of better communication with the public, the Oceanography Centre has created an interactive webpage (<http://www.oceanography.ucy.ac.cy/medusa/home.html>), in which citizens can learn more about jellyfish and the species that are of our interest (Figure 2). The site also contains recordings of jellyfish that have been made so far, by citizens (Figure 3), in an attempt to disseminate the information back to the citizens. Additionally, the Oceanography Centre is planning to create an online interactive reporting form through the webpage, which will simplify the submission of information of observations by the citizens to the Oceanography Centre.



**THE INTERNATIONAL CIESM JELLYWATCH PROGRAMME**

**WATCH FOR JELLY BLOOMS**

● STINGER

**If you see these species, send your record to [jellywatch@ucy.ac.cy](mailto:jellywatch@ucy.ac.cy)**  
**Your help is needed!**

**A CIESM CROSS-MEDITERRANEAN INITIATIVE**

**SEND A MESSAGE (WITH A DIGITAL PICTURE) WITH THIS INFORMATION:**

NAME OF JELLYFISH: see drawings

LOCATION: (name a/o geographic coordinates) coastal waters, offshore, stranded

ABUNDANCE: less than 10, 10-100, 100-500, 500-1000, more than 1000

NUMBER BY SQUARE METER: less than 10, 10-100, 100-500, more than 500

DISTANCE BETWEEN JELLYFISH: 10 cm, less than 1m, 1-5m, 5-10m, 10-20m, more than 20m

OBSERVATIONS MADE WHILE: fishing, sailing, diving, swimming, walking

Figure 1. Species of jellyfish that can be found in the Mediterranean and Black Seas.



Figure 2. Description of the species of our interest in the webpage created by the Oceanography Centre (Source: <http://www.oceanography.ucy.ac.cy/medusa/species.html>).



Figure 3. Map display of recorded species of jellyfish in the marine area of Cyprus, reported with the help of citizens. (Source: [http://www.oceanography.ucy.ac.cy/medusa/jellyfish\\_Map.html](http://www.oceanography.ucy.ac.cy/medusa/jellyfish_Map.html)).