

Natural Planet

Ep.2 – Jellyfish

In my opinion, one of the most under rated animals on Earth is also thought of as one of the scariest; the Jellyfish. If you ever go to an aquarium and just sit down and watch them, you will see they are beautiful, calm and majestic animals. The reason for their slow way of life is due to the fact they are 95% water compared to us which are approximately 65%. They have no muscles, no bones and no brain; only containing a basic digestive system for breaking down food and the food gathering organs themselves, the tentacles. They capture their food with tiny harpoon like structures in their skin which shoot out when they touch something, injecting poison, and eventually dragging the food in to their mouth to be eaten. It is this sting which hurts if you touch a jellyfish; and if you ever *do* get stung by a jellyfish, most people will rather rudely say urinate on the sting. In fact you should pour vinegar on it- far more hygienic and you don't look silly doing it.

Jellyfish come in all shapes and sizes and one of the most deadly is the Box Jellyfish. Square in shape and small in size, even the smallest of stings can stop a man's heart. An amazing fact about them is that they are the only jellyfish to have eyes. They can see shape, distance and colour but have no brain to understand what they are seeing. Scientists today are still trying to work out why these animals have eyes at all.

Other jellies have a trick unique in the animal kingdom, they can live forever. When they produce eggs or get injured or old, they can turn their body back into a young jellyfish. They can do this as many times as they want, living for as long as they want.

One thing jellyfish cannot do is control where they go. The wind and waves direct jellyfish around the world and sometimes onto beaches. When on the beach they cannot swim or crawl back into the sea and they may die. Even the jelly that can heal itself cannot survive being exposed to the sun.

I hope you have learned something about jellyfish today and that you shouldn't be scared of these amazing animals.