

PHYLUM CTENOPHORA

The "comb jellies", although classified as coelenterates, are now generally regarded as a phylum distinct from the proper coelenterates or Cnidaria. Ctenophores possess biradial symmetry, an aboral sensory area, and 8 meridional rows of fused cilia (paddle-plates); they lack the circumoral tentacles and nematocysts characteristic of the Cnidaria, and show none of the polymorphism and attached "polypoid" stages so characteristic of the latter phylum. They are essentially marine, although some are common in brackish waters as well.

KEY TO COMMON WOODS HOLE CTENOPHORA

1. Possessing a pair of tentacles, each with small side branches
 Class TENTACULATA 2
1. Without tentacles; body in the form of a flattened sac with
 wide mouth Class NUDA, Order Beroidea 4
2. Body of simple outline, without oral lobes; tentacles long but
 retractile into sheaths; gastric branches end blindly Order Cydippida 3
2. Body with 2 large oral lobes, and 4 smaller lobes (auricles),
 body somewhat triangular in outline; tentacles inconspicuous,
 without sheaths; gastric branches fuse to form loops in oral
 lobes; Order Lobata, Mnemiopsis leidyi
3. Body firm, egg shaped to nearly spherical; up to 20 mm long;
 not flattened; tentacles long, with many side branches
 Pleurobrachia pileus
3. Body of oval outline but compressed, resembling a flattened
Pleurobrachia; rare Mertensia ovum
4. The side branches of the 8 meridional gastric canals beneath
 the comb rows do not anastomose; generally north of Cape Cod
 Beroe cucumis
4. Side branches of the 8 meridional gastric canals anastomose
 Beroe ovata

ANNOTATED LIST OF CTENOPHORA

- Beroe cucumis Fabricius, 1780. A common species on the northern New England coast; rare or occasional south of Cape Cod.
- Beroe ovata Chamisso and Eysenhardt, 1821. A southern species, irregular in occurrence north of Delaware Bay.
- Mertensia ovum (Fabricius, 1780). An arctic species, the young of which occur occasionally as far south as New Jersey.
- Mnemiopsis leidyi A. Agassiz, 1865. This is the commonest ctenophore of Woods Hole waters, especially in late summer and fall. Brilliantly luminescent when disturbed. Often found to contain wormlike pink, immature stages of the sea anemone Edwardsia sp.
- Pleurobrachia pileus (Fabricius, 1780). An arctic species, found at Woods Hole in winter and spring; usually not seen in July and August.

REFERENCES

- Hyman, L. H., Chapter VIII, Ctenophora, in "The Invertebrates", Vol. I, Protozoa through Ctenophora, 1940.
- Mayer, A. G., 1911. Ctenophores of the Atlantic Coast of North America. Carnegie Inst. of Washington, Publ. no. 162: 1-58, 17 pl.