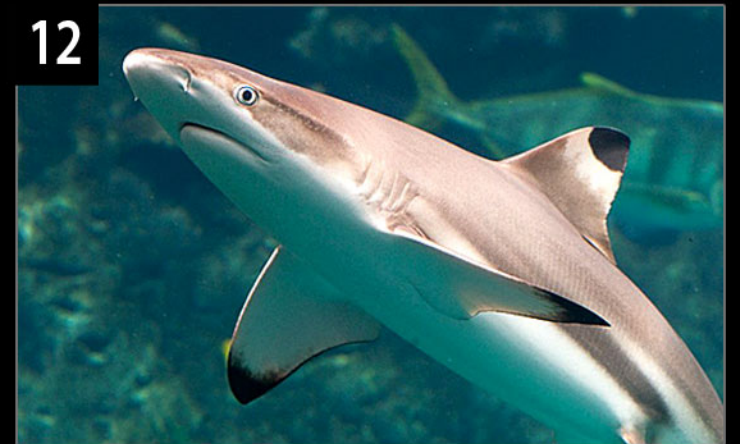
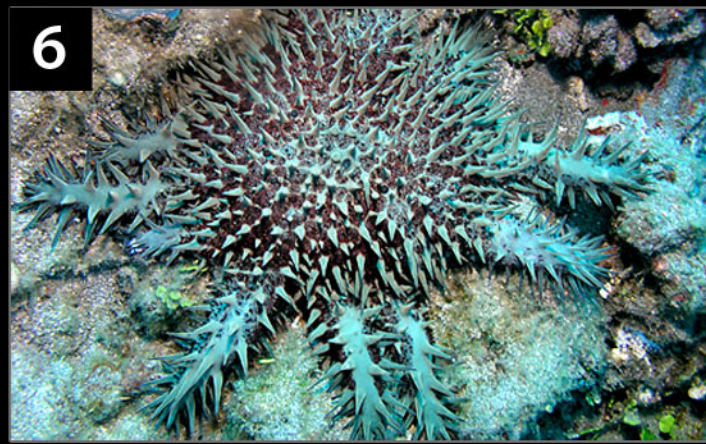
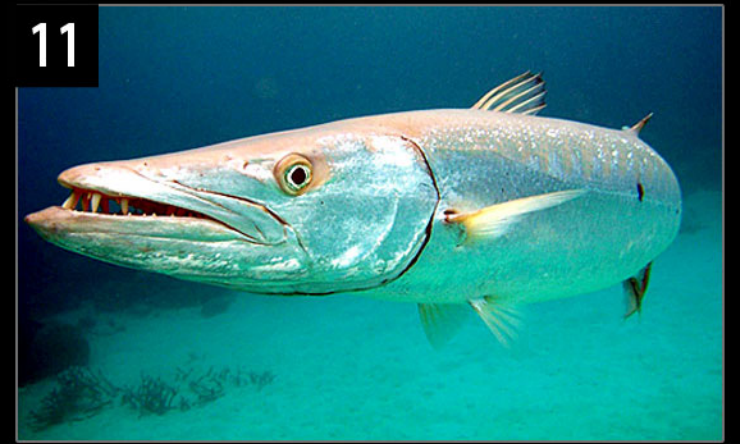
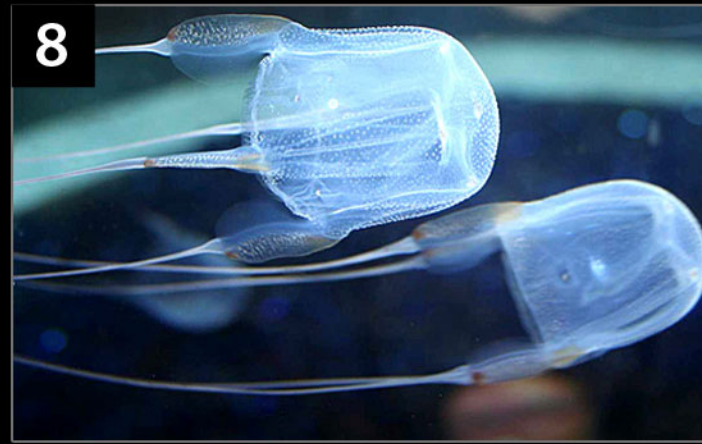
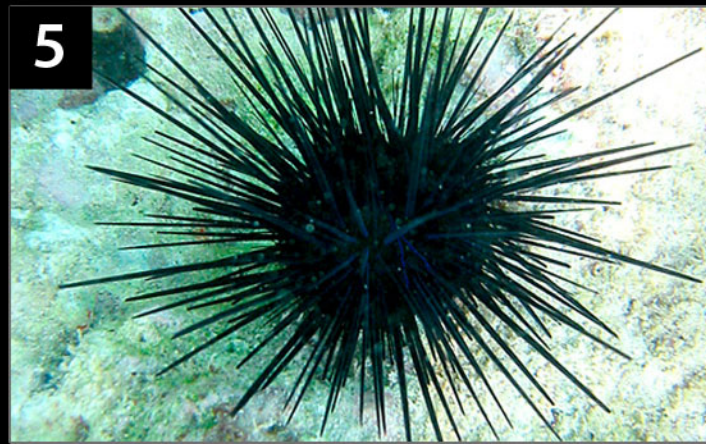




Water Hazards

HAZARDOUS MARINE LIFE FOUND IN OKINAWA

Hazardous Marine Life in the waters of Okinawa is the same as you will find in sub-tropical areas of the Pacific. Prior to entering the water personnel should familiarize themselves with the common marine inhabitants.



1. STONE FISH

This species camouflage is incredibly effective and only observers with a trained eye are likely to see them. However, there are several things you can do to reduce the likelihood of standing on, sitting on, or accidentally touching one of these highly poisonous fish. Always wear thick-soled shoes, dive boots or reef-walking shoes while treading on the bottom. Whenever possible, swim rather than walk to lessen the chance of being stung by a stonefish. When walking, shuffle your feet in front of the other rather than big strides in which each foot is raised up and placed down onto the sea bed. The shuffle motion will increase the likelihood that you scare a stonefish away from your tracks rather than stepping on its spines. If a person is injured by a stonefish seek medical attention without delay.

2. LION FISH

Lionfish are beautiful but, deadly. Their feather-like fins are brightly-colored and tipped with strong venom. Lionfish are secretive, hiding under ledges and in caves during the day. They are nocturnal predators, actively feeding at night. Lionfish feed on crabs, shrimps and small fish. A sting from a Lionfish is extremely painful, and victims must seek medical attention immediately. Soaking the limb in very hot water is recommended for first aid. Lionfish are popular aquarium pets. Caution should be used if you plan on keeping one as a pet. If a person is suspected to have been injured by a Lionfish seek medical attention without delay.

3. CONE SNAILS

The cone snail is equipped with a harpoon like tooth which injects its prey with a highly potent concoction of toxins. Some species of cone snails can cause serious injuries and even death to humans. If you collect seashells do so with great care. If a person is suspected to have been injured by a cone snail seek medical attention without delay.

4. SEA SNAKES

Sea snakes inhabit the tropical waters of the Indo-Pacific and are highly venomous. Sea snakes have flattened tails for swimming and have valves over their nostrils that are closed underwater. Sea snakes may be inquisitive but are not considered aggressive unless threatened such as when caught in fishing net or handled roughly. If a snake should approach don't panic, simply swim away. Very few sea snake bites occur around the world and those that do, usually happen on trawlers, when the snakes are sometimes hauled in with the catch. Someone suspected of being bitten should be taken to the hospital without delay.

5. SEA URCHINS

There are several different types of urchins living in Okinawa. Generally you don't have to worry too much if you are standing on sand; these creatures like the reef and rocks. Stepping on or even touching a urchin can not only drive a spine into flesh, but the spines are so brittle that they often break off in the wound and become infected easily. Use reef walker type shoes or dive boots while walking in shallow water or along the shoreline. Do not stand or walk on coral. If you should step on a sea urchin the safest bet is to seek medical attention if spines break off under the skin.

6. CROWN OF THORN STARFISH

The only starfish on Okinawa to look out for would be the crown-of-thorns starfish. Their bodies are covered with sharp, pointed spines that have venom. Stepping on or bumping against these creatures will result in the spines penetrating the skin and venom injection. The pain can be intense and severe reaction may result in nausea and vomiting or shock. You may need to seek medical treatment.

7. BLUE RINGED OCTOPUS

The blue ringed octopus is small, and rarely is larger than a few inches from the tip of one tentacle across to the tip of the opposite tentacle. It is normally light colored with dark brown bands over each of its eight arms and body, with blue circles superimposed on the dark brown bands. When the octopus is threatened the rings turn a brilliant electric-blue color, and it is this change that gives the animal its name. The blue ringed octopus is very poisonous and should never be handled. The octopus has a parrot-like beak that contains a poison that could cause respiratory paralysis. Parents should keep a very watchful eye on the things children pick up while at the ocean. Someone suspected of being bitten should be taken to the hospital without delay.

8. BOX JELLYFISH

The Box Jellyfish (locally known as the Habu Kurage) produces a very painful sting with potential to be life threatening. May through September is a time when the waters surrounding Okinawa become very warm, and along with this warmth brings increase sightings of jellyfish. When heading to the ocean during periods when jellyfish may be abundant, use these common sense preventive measures:

- If jellyfish are washed-up onto shore don't enter the water.
- Don't touch a jellyfish even though it is dead. The tentacles can still sting.

9. FIRE CORAL

All cuts from contact with coral should receive medical attention. The Fire Coral can actually sting a diver since coral is a coelenterate like jellyfish. Some of the soft coral of this species have been found to contain the deadliest poison known to man. This poison is found within the body of the organism and not in the stinging nematocysts. The slime of this coral may cause a serious skin reaction (dermatitis) or even be fatal if exposed to an open wound. No antidote is known. If injured from contact with coral, clean wound with liberal amounts of fresh water and seek medical attention.

10. MORAY EEL

Eels are commonly found in holes and crevices or under rocks and coral. It is snake-like in both appearance and movement and has tough, leathery skin. It can grow to a length of 15 feet and has prominent teeth. Bites frequently result from reaching into a crevice or hole occupied by the eel. It is a vicious biter and may be difficult to dislodge after a bite is initiated. Bites from moray eels may vary from multiple small puncture wounds to the tearing, jagged type with profuse bleeding if there has been a struggle. Extreme care should be used when reaching into holes or crevices. Avoid provoking or attempting to dislodge an eel from its hole.

11. BARRACUDA

Approximately 10 species of barracuda inhabit the waters of Okinawa. The barracuda is a long, thin fish with prominent jaws and teeth, silver to blue in color, with a large head and a V-shaped tail. It may grow up to 10 feet long and is a fast swimmer, capable of striking rapidly and fiercely. They have been known to attack surface swimmers and limbs dangling in the water. Life threatening attacks by barracuda are rare. Barracuda are attracted by any bright object. Avoid wearing shiny equipment or jewelry (wedding rings or earrings).

12. SHARKS

Attacks on humans are infrequent; and rarely do they occur in Okinawan waters. Attacks are usually provoked when the animal feels threatened. Injuries may result not only from bites, but also by coming in contact with the species skin. Shark skin is covered with very sharp dentine appendages, called denticles, which are reinforced with tooth-like centers. Contact with shark skin can lead to wide abrasions and heavy bleeding. Pre-attack behavior by most sharks is somewhat predictable. A shark preparing to attack swims with an exaggerated motion, its pectoral fins pointing down in contrast to the usual flared out position, and it swims in circles of decreasing radius around the prey.