

Observations of Clinging Jellyfish in New Jersey

On June 9, 2016, a small number of clinging jellyfish (*Gonionemus vertens*), a non-natives species of jellyfish, were observed and recorded for the first time ever in New Jersey in the Manasquan River. Since this first observation, more individuals have been observed in the Shrewsbury River. The DEP, along with Montclair State University, has since initiated a sampling plan for assessing the abundance and distribution of clinging jellyfish in New Jersey waters. The sampling effort began on June 23, 2016 in the northern reach of Barnegat Bay, and in the Manasquan and Shrewsbury River estuaries. This effort will continue for 30 days through July 2016. As observations are made, they will appear in the table and maps below.

During the day, clinging jellyfish attach to vegetation and other objects. At night, or on cloudy days, clinging jellyfish swim to the surface then sink upside down with tentacles spread out to catch organisms such as copepods, larvae, and other small organisms. This jellyfish is native to the coastal embayments of the Seas of Japan and Okhotsk, in temperate to warm-temperate waters. In the scientific literature, evidence supports that oyster research and the import of oysters from Europe and the east Pacific in the late 1800's caused the inadvertent introduction of the clinging jellyfish to the coastal waters of the United States.

For more than 100 years along the east coast, this species was observed only in sheltered coastal areas in and around Woods Hole, Massachusetts and in Connecticut. Most recently, they have also been observed in one location in eastern Long Island, New York and now in New Jersey. Clinging jellyfish are strictly a littoral species, which means that they prefer to live in shallow inshore waters and coastal lagoons where algae and sea grasses are present. Therefore, you would not expect to encounter them at ocean beaches.

Clinging Jellyfish in New Jersey: Sampling Dates and Results, along with Confirmed Sightings (as of July 25, 2016)		
Date	Location	Comments
6/9/2016	Manasquan River, near PP canal entrance	One specimen collected; species confirmed as <i>G. vertens</i> by DNA analysis (Montclair State U).
6/15/2016	Shrewsbury River, Monmouth Beach	Man hospitalized after making contact with <i>G. vertens</i> potentially only one medusa
6/15/2016	Shrewsbury River, Monmouth Beach	Property owner on lagoon observed several individuals; Montclair State U collected about 7 specimens from in and around this location later that day.
6/16/2016	Shrewsbury & Northern Barnegat Bay	No clinging jellyfish observed. (DEP & MSU)
6/18/2016	Shrewsbury River, Oceanport	7 specimens collected from the Shrewsbury River
6/19/2016	Shrewsbury River, Monmouth Beach, Columbus Dr	About 45 specimens observed off of family dock
6/19/2016	Shrewsbury River, Sea Bright, Ocean Avenue	One individual <i>G. vertens</i> was reported to be seen swimming 20 yards from shore in 3 feet of water, this location is at the confluence of the Navesink and Shrewsbury Rivers.
6/20/2016	Shrewsbury River, Patricia Ct., Monmouth Beach	50 Individuals collected in shallow water by local resident. Given to Montclair State U. for confirmation
6/21/2016	Shrewsbury River, Patricia Ct., Monmouth Beach	30 Individuals collected in shallow water by Montclair State U
7/6/2016	Shrewsbury River	2 Individuals observed and collected by MSU off private dock at Raccoon Island



- ★ Confirmed Sightings
- Locations Sampled as of 7/25/2016 (DEP & Montclair State Univ.)