

The Adventure of the Lion's Mane

It's 1926 and Sherlock Holmes is basking on the beaches of Sussex in his well-earned retirement ... but not for long. For in short order he finds himself contemplating the bizarre murder of Fitzroy McPherson who collapses at his feet on the seashore covered in red welts and mumbling something about a "lion's mane" -- or so goes Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's short story, *The Adventure of the Lion's Mane*. While not one of the more popular adventures of Mr. Holmes, as in all his cases, after a false lead or two, he ultimately finds the real killer, in this case: *Cyanea capillata*, or the Lion's Mane jellyfish.

By now most folks on the Northshore have heard about Lion's Mane jellyfish. Some have actually seen them washed up on the beach or, more frighteningly, actually been stung by one. But, thankfully, unlike in Mr. McPherson's case, the sting of the Lion's Mane jellyfish, though painful, is not considered to be fatal.

What do we know about these visitors to our marine neighborhood? A trip to the *Oceana* website provides these facts:

- The Lion's Mane jellyfish is one of the largest jelly species in the world, with tentacles growing to an average length of 1.5 feet but can reach lengths of 6.5 feet ... the longest ever recorded being 120 feet long!
- Its tentacles are equipped with nematocysts containing poison that stun its prey, including small fish and tiny crustaceans.
- The top of the jelly's bell is usually dark yellow or red in color and thick in the center, but thins out towards the edges.
- Its 'mane' of long, hair-like tentacles hanging from the underside of its bell-shaped body is the inspiration behind the "lion mane's" common name.
- It also possesses bioluminescent abilities, producing its own light and glowing in the dark underwater.

[Oceana is the largest international advocacy organization focused solely on ocean conservation. See Oceana.org]

Lion's Mane jellyfish are more common in the cold waters of the Arctic, northern Atlantic and northern Pacific, but are not a stranger to Massachusetts waters. What is unusual is the large number of them in our area this year, as well as their bigger size. The reason why they're here in such numbers is not yet not fully understood, but may be due to changing ocean currents and winds patterns.

Whatever the reason, they are here this summer and should be avoided both in and out of the water as they can sting even if washed up on the beach. So, if you see one, the lesson to keep in mind is (as Sherlock Holmes might say) elementary: **Don't touch!**

Notice of Swampscott Conservancy's Annual Members Meeting

As the Swampscott Conservancy enters its third year, we wish to thank everyone for their strong support and shared commitment to protecting and enhancing our town's natural resources for the benefit and enjoyment of all. We invite you to join us for the Conservancy's 2nd Annual Member's Meeting which will be held remotely via Zoom on Wednesday, July 22nd at 7:00 pm. Information on how to join the meeting is on our website at swampscottconservancy.org

There will be a brief report of the Conservancy's activities this past year and an outline of plans for the future. This will be followed by the election of the Directors and Officers by members. The slate proposed by the nominating committee is also on our website. The meeting will end with an open discussion so that members can raise issues, present ideas, and otherwise make suggestions to the Board and Officers.

If you are an existing member and haven't already renewed for 2020, please do. And if you're not yet a member, please join. Membership provides the most significant portion of the Conservancy's annual operating revenue. Memberships are tax deductible and a tax receipt is available upon request for all contributions received. And, if you purchase from Amazon.com, consider logging in to Smile.Amazon.com and designating the Swampscott Conservancy Corporation as your favorite charity.

We hope that you will become more involved in the Conservancy's upcoming events and projects. And your ideas and help in coming up with new ideas are welcome.

You can always contact us via our website or at:

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