

Article from the October 2020 edition of Harbour Spiel

Local lakes included in study of invasive freshwater jellyfish

If you brushed against something slimey while swimming in local lakes this summer, don't be alarmed — it might have been a freshwater jellyfish.

At least one local lake, Hotel, has been included in a study to learn more about *Craspedacusta sowerbyi*, an invasive species of jellyfish that has been found in lakes throughout southern BC since 1990.

In an email to the Harbour Spiel, Florian Luskow, a graduate student and marine biologist at UBC, said the penny-sized jellyfish is not harmful to humans and only visible in lakes a few months of the year, usually from August to September. "However, the effect on the food web is so far not clearly studied," he said.

"A follow up project to better understand its functioning is on its way."

According to Britannica.com, *Craspedacusta* grows to approximately 2 cm (0.8 inches) in diameter. "Several hundred short tentacles extend, fringelike, from the margins of the animal's bell-shaped body."

Researchers have included Hotel Lake with a number of other lakes in southwest BC in a study to learn more about the jellyfish which is thought to have originated from China's Yangtze River area.

"Actually, Hotel Lake was not just chosen as a random example, but as one lake where repeatedly *Craspedacusta* has been spotted," said Luskow.

"According to my database, there have been records of freshwater jellyfish in Hotel Lake in 2015 and also in August 2020."

Luskow said the species has also been sighted in Katherine Lake, Klein Lake, Ambrose Lake and Moccasin Lake (a small pond near Egmont).

The species is a successful traveller as Luskow points to the fact that the jellyfish has now been found on all continents except for Antarctica.

In an Aug. 27 story, Luskow told Victoria's Times Colonist that it is almost impossible to prove how the jellyfish ended up in local lakes in that region.

Luskow said the invasion could have happened in several ways, including from plant materials, birds' feet, paddleboards, ballast water from boats or in containers used to stock lakes with fish.

Luskow asks that if anyone spots the species in other lakes, ponds or creeks, to send him an email at flues-kow@eoas.ubc.ca.

Florian Luskow, UBC