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THERE'S A NEW JELLY IN TOWN – AND HE HAS COMPANY!

Vancouver, B.C. – What grows to about four centimeters across and is rimmed with hundreds of fine white tentacles? The cross jelly on display at the Vancouver Aquarium for the duration of the summer. This is the first time the cross jelly has been introduced as part of Vancouver Aquarium's jellies exhibit, which features over 100 mesmerizing and graceful jellies.

The new cross jellies now captivating visitors at the Aquarium are common in B.C.'s local coastal waters, but are often overlooked because they're translucent. Like drifting UFOs, the ephemeral jellies appear along our coast in May and usually disappear by late fall.

These transparent jellies are named after a cross structure on their bells – called radial canals – to which their white gonads are attached. Surprisingly, some cross jellies come with hitchhikers. Two at the Aquarium are hosting a parasitic anemone that is feeding off gonads.

First ingested by a cross jelly as a larva, this parasitic anemone called the jelly-dwelling anemone, turns the table on the jelly by feeding on the stomach tissues of the jelly for 11 days. It then travels to the underside of the jelly's bell and feeds on the gonads of the jelly. It will continue to feed on the jelly for roughly 31 days, until it acquires its adult characteristics.

This parasitic anemone looks like a large, thick, white blob and it hangs from a jelly's gonad. Once it develops its adult characteristics, the anemone drops to the sea floor where it lives the rest of its life independent of a host.

The cross jellies will be on display in the Aquarium's Windows on Research area. The parasitic anemone is expected to remain attached to its host for the next few days and may be on display after it leaves the jelly for two weeks following its detachment.

About Vancouver Aquarium

The Vancouver Aquarium is a global leader in connecting people to our natural world, and a self-supporting, non-profit association dedicated to effecting the conservation of aquatic life through display and interpretation, education, research, and direct action. Learn more at www.vanaqua.org.

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Editors: Cross jelly images and footage are available.

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