

The Virgin Islands Consortium

D.P.N.R. Sounding Alarm After Deadly Fish Called 'Floating Terror' Spotted On South Shore

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ST. CROIX -- The Department of Planning and Natural Resources announced today that the St. Croix East End Marine Park, part of D.P.N.R.'s Division of Coastal Zone Management, is advising the public about a recent sighting of a Portuguese man o' war, above, at Robin Bay.

The Atlantic Portuguese man o' war, also known as the Man-of-War, blue bubble, or floating terror, is a marine hydrozoan of the family Physaliidae found in the Atlantic Ocean, as well as the Indian and Pacific Oceans. Its venomous tentacles can deliver a painful (and sometimes fatal) sting. Despite its outward appearance, the Portuguese man o' war is not a jellyfish but a siphonophore, which is distinguished from jellyfish in that it is

not a single multicellular organism, but a colonial organism made up of specialized minute individual organisms called zooids. These zooids are attached to one another and physiologically integrated to the extent that they cannot survive independently and function as if they were an individual organism.

One single Portuguese man o' war was seen on the shore on Tuesday, May 24, according to D.P.N.R. Swimmers and beachgoers on the South Shore should remain vigilant, and the tentacles should be avoided if a Portuguese man o' war is encountered in the water or along the shoreline.

If stung, affected skin areas can be rinsed with seawater (fresh water will set off more stinging cells) followed by household vinegar. If a serious reaction results from the sting, medical attention should be sought, D.P.N.R. says.

For more information please call the STXEEMP at 718-3367 or DPNR-DFW at 773-1082