

Monster 15cm jellyfish adds sting to dangers

Julie Lightfoot

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THE first box jellyfish of the season has been found off a Far Northern beach - and it is a whopper for this time of year.

Mission Beach couple Mike and Joyce Phelan found the dead jellyfish floating in the ocean just off South Mission Beach on Monday afternoon.

It was potentially deadly, measuring 15cm across its bell and having tentacles spanning 38cm.

Surf Lifesaving North Queensland's Ebeny Keating said it was uncommon to find such a large jellyfish before seeing juveniles.

"Usually, we see the smaller ones first but it is one of those things that can happen and it's a big reminder to get the protective clothing on when you're boating, to swim inside the stinger nets and carry vinegar," she said.

A worried Mrs Phelan said people were still swimming in open water, despite stinger nets going back in the ocean this month across the Far North, including two in her home town.

Mission Beach surf lifesaver and paramedic Simon Towe, who confirmed the Phelans' find was a potentially deadly box jellyfish, said none had been caught during drag-netting at the weekend.

But Surf Lifesaving North Queensland warned last week that heavy rains may have flushed out marine stingers.

While drag-netting across the Far North had not yet turned-up any box jellyfish or irukandji, she said surf lifesavers had netted a lot of baby prawns which were a food source for the species.

She urged swimmers to stay out of the open water during this week's idyllic flat conditions.

Also yesterday, a 43-year-old man was flown to hospital after he was stung by a jellyfish while swimming off Double Island.

The man was winched off a vessel about two nautical miles north of Double Island, off Palm Cove, by the Emergency Management Queensland rescue helicopter about 9.30am.

The man, believed to be the first victim of a marine stinger this season, was in a stable condition in Cairns Base Hospital last night.



That's a whopper: Mission Beach's Mike Phelan carefully handles a dead box jellyfish, with its stinging tentacles removed. The box jellyfish is the first to be found in the Far North this season and is a whopper for this time of the year.