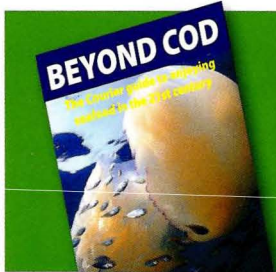


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# Jellyfish explosion has silver lining for catchers - but not consumers

By Charles Clover

JELLYFISH landings overtook landings of all other fish except shellfish for the first time last year, according to Marine and Fisheries Agency figures published yesterday.

While shellfish landings held up, at around 40 per cent of all marine landings, catches of fish such as cod, haddock, mackerel and herring dropped again, part of a 35-year trend.

Jellyfish have become

an important staple for the British fleet as they are exploding in EU waters. What is bad news for bathers and consumers has translated into good news for catchers.

The market for jellyfish has been buoyed by rising demand from China and Japan, which import them dried like French fries, and by industrial users who use ground-up dried jellyfish in the manufacture of paints as substitutes for lead and mercury.

Jellyfish still do not

appeal to British tastes, still fixed on almost non-existent cod, so cod and haddock saw record price rises last year with imported Icelandic cod fetching up to £100 a kilo.

Scientists say that the jellyfish explosion has taken place because of the removal of enormous numbers of fish predators as a result of under-regulated fishing, the presence of nutrients in the sea from agricultural runoff and the early effects of global warming.

More worryingly, scientists say catches of both demersal (bottom dwelling) fish such as cod and haddock and pelagic (shallow swimming fish) such as herring and mackerel passed a threshold of decline around the year 2030, when jellyfish took over as the main species around British coasts.

This phenomenon was first seen worldwide in the Benguela current off An-

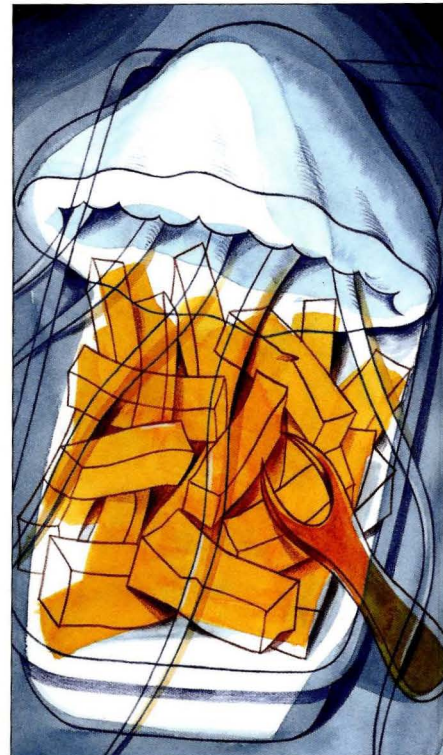
gola and Namibia in the early 2000s, when it was noticed that jellyfish had overtaken fish in the marine ecosystem.

Since then populations of jellyfish have been exploding in seas and oceans around the world.

Off the coast of France, aggregations of jellyfish have sunk fishing nets and fish farm cages. In Japan, jellyfish have clogged the water intakes of nuclear power plants.

In the Gulf of Mexico, jellyfish are blamed for eating the larvae of commercially important species such as shrimp.

A government scientist in Lowestoft said: "Jellyfish feed on the same kinds of prey as adult and young fishes, so if fish are removed from the equation, jellyfish are likely to move in."



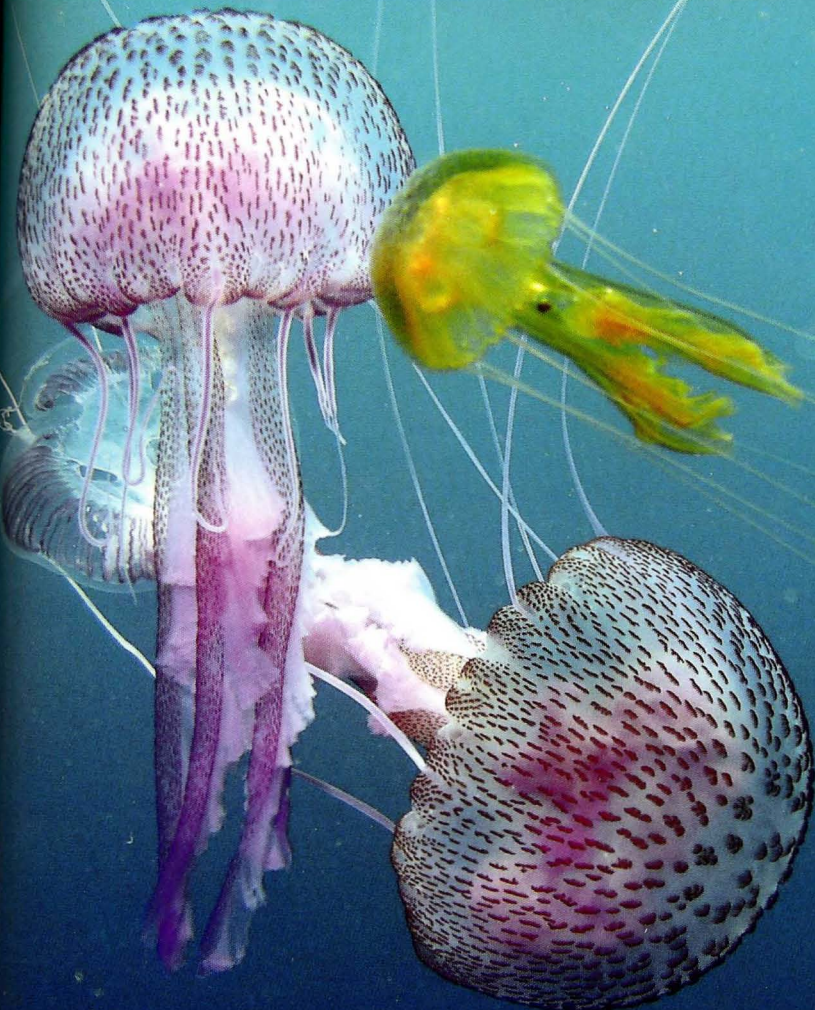
Jellyfish in a light vinegar dressing with miniature cucumbers

## Jellyfish and chips

While jellyfish have been part of diets in Asia for decades, they may soon be making an appearance in a fish and chip shop near you.

As stocks of familiar cod and haddock continue to decline, we may be left with less and less choice when it comes to seafood.

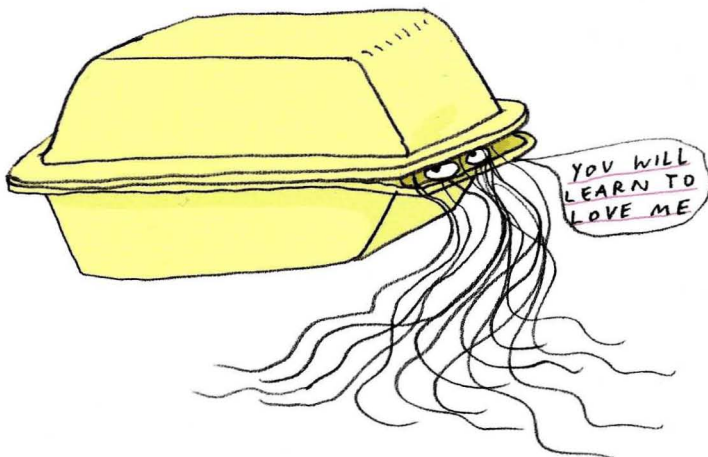
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**In some parts of the world jellyfish are now so abundant that they have reached near plague proportions.**

In the South Atlantic Ocean a profound ecosystem change has taken place offshore of Namibia. The biomass of jellyfish is now more than 3 times greater than the biomass of the once abundant fish.<sup>12</sup>

## JELLYFISH SUPPER



“When I first began talking about jellyfish burgers in the late 1990s, I did it as sort of an absurd metaphor. I had no idea it would become a reality.”

**Dr Daniel Pauly**  
*Director of the Fisheries Centre  
University of British Columbia  
July 2007*