

Pink peril

THEY THOUGHT it was nearly over - but it seems not. The jellyfish are back, or to be more precise, mini-blooms of the infamous mauve stinger *Pelagia noctiluca* have been spotted all along the Côte d'Azur coast since April. It bodes ill for summer sea swimmers who, for the fourth year in a row, need to keep their eyes peeled underwater when enjoying a dip.

There are 170 species of this watery menace in the Mediterranean and the mauve stinger variety - la luminosa in Italian or la violette in French - has been studied in the north western basin since 1775. A cyclical pattern has emerged showing that every 10, 12 or 14 years they appear in shallow waters en masse for two or three years in a row and then disappear again. What's worrying scientists is that we are entering our fourth summer of discontent for bathers and most agree that something is rotten in the state of the Mediterranean. Blame is falling on warmer seas polluted by coastal development **contd p6**



Pink peril back this year?

Advice on the jellyfish influx expected on the coast

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and a lack of fresh water entering the Med. via rivers and rainwater. Meanwhile, over-fishing has put huge pressure on large species, such as swordfish and red tuna which eat jellyfish, and on smaller varieties that compete for food with the stingers.

The Côte d'Azur's pink peril population live out at sea,



The severe reaction

with a concentration on the edges of the Ligurian current from Italy, and it's an east wind or a per-

sistently southerly which brings them into shore. As a regular bather off Cap d'Ail I've been stung four times, one of which caused my arm to swell up

alarmingly. This summer I'm armed with a new product called Jellyfish Squish from Coastal Solutions in the USA. Their rep down here saw my swollen arm on the www.mctimes.com daily news site (posted in 2006!) and hot-footed over to give us some samples.

It's a topical anaesthetic which you apply immediately to the affected area. It works by "killing" the nematocysts left on the skin and neutralising the toxins. One application is enough, they say, to sooth the burning sensation.

Watch this space! The company is looking for local distributors so it is not yet available in retail outlets. Meanwhile, if you get hit here's some advice:

- rinse the area well with sea water (not

freshwater) and do not rub the area. Neat vinegar is supposed to de-activate the nematocysts.

-remove remaining nematocysts by applying shaving foam and very gently scraping them off with a credit card or razor

- apply a freezing spray from a pharmacy or an ice pack to relieve the pain.

If you have any difficulty breathing, itchiness elsewhere on the body, fast heart rate or difficulty swallowing, contact the emergency services at once.

Claire Lathbury



The jellyfish barrier set up on one side of Monaco's Larvotto beach in Monaco last year