

Janthina hangs to a bubble

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Contributor

This vivid purple snail is one of the great seafarers of the animal kingdom and spends its entire life hanging upside-down to a bubble raft. *Janthina janthina* was first documented by Carl Linnaeus in 1758 and has also been documented as, according to The Darwin Foundation, a gastropod often seen around the islands.

As snails are one of the most widely distributed invertebrates in the world, they have adapted to many unique environments and this one is no exception. *Janthina* sp. is distributed globally in waters of both tropical and temperate seas and can be found in large groups on the ocean or stranded on the beach, according to Atlantis Diving and Australian Geographic.

According to Australian Geographic, these snails are some of the largest members of the Pleuston group, at 30-40 millimeters, and live their entire lives in the pelagic zone, living on the border between the sky and the sea. They do this by creating a bubble raft.

Janthina sp. builds its bubble raft by secreting a chitinous mucus that quickly hardens forming



Courtesy of The Metro Mel

Janthina janthina, a violet sea snail found in warm waters around the world, spends its entire life hanging upside down to a bubble "raft."

a solid, yet fragile raft. This raft is then attached to their foot where they spend their lives completely upside-down. It goes without saying then, if these fragile rafts are busted or lost, the snail will sink into the ocean depths and die.

The upside-down lifestyle they practice is also tied to their unique coloration called countercolor. This means that the dorsal (back)

and ventral (front) sides are colored differently to match their environment. *Janthina* sp. does this by having a light violet coloration on the top of their shell, which is facing the ocean depths, and a dark purple on their underside, which is always facing the sky allowing them to blend into both the sky and the sea.

While drifting around with the ocean currents, these unique snails will feed mainly on the tiny medusa of cnidaria, but since they are subject to the whim of the ocean they aren't picky about their food. They will, if given the chance, eat by-the-wind-sailors (*Velella velella*) and Portuguese Man O' War (*Physalia physalis*). While also eating they are often eaten by fish, birds, sea turtles, mollusks and nudibranchs, according to Australian Geographic.

In their reproduction all *Janthina* sp. begin their lives as males and only later switch to being female later in life. Since males lack a penis, they instead shoot the sperm in the female's general direction, like many aquatic organisms. After fertilization, eggs are kept by the female until they hatch, fully capable of caring for themselves after which they make their own bubble raft and set off on their own voyage through the sea.

Storm causes damage, knocks out power

High winds and rain Sunday night and Monday morning wreaked havoc on the Brevard College campus and around Transylvania County, causing damage and power outages on lower campus, including the Villages, that lasted until late Tuesday evening.

Among the damage on campus was an uprooted tree between the tennis courts and Ross Hall (below and right). The flag pole in the residential quad was also toppled (far right); a close up of the base of the flag pole suggests the ferocity of the winds (bottom center).

The torrential rains and wind resulted in roughly half of 16,000 Duke Energy customers in Transylvania County losing power; as of 11:15 a.m. Tuesday, more than 3,000 were still without power. Rainfall amounts vary, but more than 5 inches of rain were estimated in parts of Brevard.

The severe weather was part of a line of storms that swept through the entire region, spawning tornadoes that killed at least 34, including nine people in South Carolina.



Photo by Sam Hipp



Photo by Zach Dickerson



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