**Ctenophores**

**Background information:**

Ctenophorans range in size from only half a centimeter in length to over 1 meter long.

**Ctenophorans either drift with the current or are weak swimmers using ctene (comb plates) consisting of hundreds of partially fused cilia arranged along eight longitudinal comb rows.**

**Comb jellies are predators, and their tentacles are armed with unique, sticky colloblast cells that capture small invertebrate prey.** Once trapped, either muscle in the core of the tentacle contracts to pull food toward the mouth.

Ctenophorans are often found in perpetually dark parts of the oceans, and like other animals that inhabit this environment, the use of light bioluminescence has become an important tool for attracting prey, signaling danger, or finding a mate. The light observed in this species is actually from the movement of the ctenes which refracts light as the animal moves.

Obtain a dish containing a comb jelly . Fed it a few copepods or other food available. They may not feed. Do not use much light or you will overheat and kill these animals. You can watch the shrimp move down the gut. Then turn off all lights of the microscope, light from the bottom but dimly against a dark plate, or from above but only with very dim light. The cilia will refract light and you should be entertained by the light show of blue, yellow and red refractive waves of light moving down the cilia. These are delicate animals and we do not want to stress them, so keep the lights low unless filming and try not to overfeed. **Each pair should try for a quick movie of their specimen either feeding or just record the light show caused by their movement. Check periodically with your lab instructor so he can add fresh seawater after feedings. Record your observations in your journal.**

