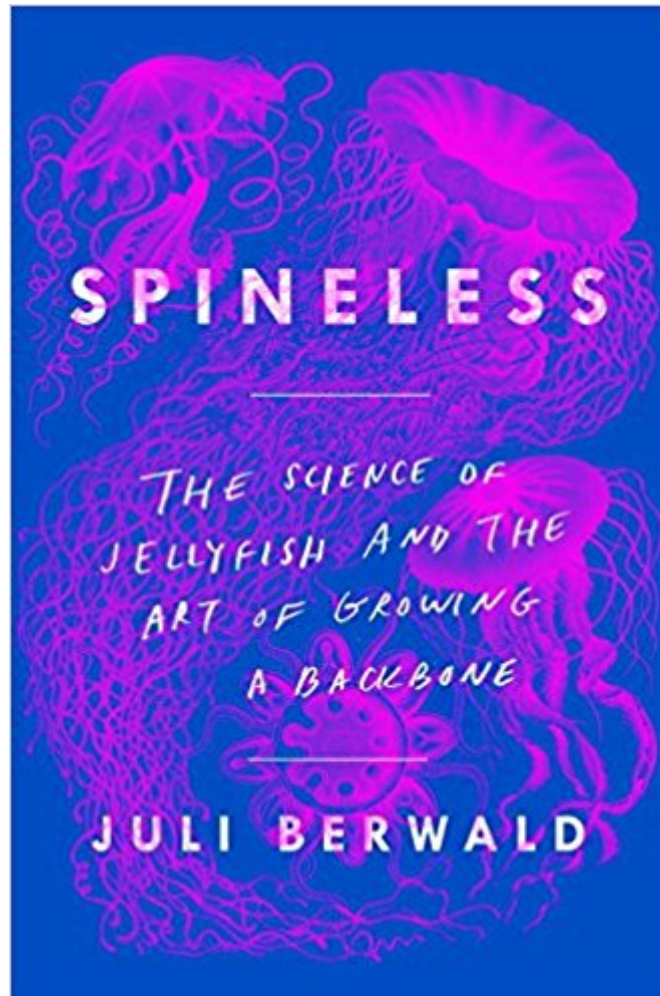




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# Spineless: The Science Of Jellyfish And The Art Of Growing A Backbone



## Synopsis

A former ocean scientist goes in pursuit of the slippery story of jellyfish, rediscovering her passion for marine science and the sea's imperiled ecosystems. Jellyfish are an enigma. They have no centralized brain, but they see and feel and react to their environment in complex ways. They look simple, yet their propulsion systems are so advanced that engineers are just learning how to mimic them. They produce some of the deadliest toxins on the planet and still remain undeniably alluring. Long ignored by science, they may be a key to ecosystem stability. Juli Berwald's journey into the world of jellyfish is a personal one. More than a decade ago, she left the sea and her scientific career behind to raise a family in landlocked Austin, Texas. Increasingly dire headlines drew her back to jellies, as unprecedented jellyfish blooms toppled ecosystems and collapsed the world's most productive fisheries. What was unclear was whether these incidents were symptoms of a changing planet or part of a natural cycle. Berwald's desire to understand jellyfish takes her on a scientific odyssey. She travels the globe to meet the scientists who devote their careers to jellies; hitches rides on Japanese fishing boats to see giant jellyfish in the wild; raises jellyfish in her dining room; and throughout it all marvels at the complexity of these fascinating and ominous biological wonders. Gracefully blending personal memoir with crystal-clear distillations of science, *Spineless* reveals that jellyfish are a bellwether for the damage we're inflicting on the climate and the oceans and a call to realize our collective responsibility for the planet we share.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

“Spineless” is as mesmerizing, surprising, and beautiful as the jellyfish itself. Every page contains some astonishing treasure. If you cherish the sea, if you care about the environment, if you relish life on this sweet, blue planet, you will love this book.

• Sy Montgomery, *A New York Times* bestselling author of *The Soul of an Octopus*

“Captivating and informative.”

• Publishers Weekly (starred review)

“Lucid, eye-opening... In this lovely exploration of the mysterious jellyfish, Berwald both entrances and sounds a warning: pay attention to the messages sent by ocean life, and act to protect their environment, and ours.”

• Kirkus Reviews

“In this astonishing adventure of a book, Juli Berwald takes us on a personal journey into the enchanting and mystifying aqueous world of jellyfish, and in so doing, sheds light on the vital ecological balances upon which our own survival depends.”

• Ruth Ozeki, author of *A Tale for the Time Being*

“Like Bernd Heinrich, Juli Berwald illuminates an entire ecosystem through the lens of one remarkable group of creatures. I learned something from every page, not only about jellyfish but about the crucial role of marine scientists and their studies.”

• Andrea Barrett, author of *Archangel* and *The Voyage of the Narwhal*

“With lucid, gorgeous, arresting language, Juli Berwald opens a rare window on the adventures of scientists at work, capturing the fabulously ingenious ways they make sense of our world. Spineless will leave you awestruck, revering the ever-more fragile brilliance of life on Earth.”

• Miriam Horn, author of *Rancher, Farmer, Fisherman*

“More than a mere look at jellyfish... [Spineless] provides plenty of food for thought for those seeking to make different choices in their treatment of the environment and in their own lives.”

• Library Journal

Juli Berwald received her Ph.D. in Ocean Science from the University of Southern California. A science textbook writer and editor, she has written for a number of publications, including *The New York Times*, *Nature*, *National Geographic*, and *Slate*.

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