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(left and top) **BLUE RING OCTOPUS** (*Hapalochlaena*) / **SIZE: GOLFBALL or 20 cm (8 in.) across stretched arms**

BLUE RING OCTOPUS POSING BEFORE DARTING OFF This blue-ring octopus is the size of a golf ball, but its venom is powerful enough to kill 26 humans in minutes. This poison is 10,000 times more potent than cyanide. When bitten, the victim's nerve system is stopped, paralysis sets in, then death. The octopus' parrot-like beak can bite through divers' wet suits. I was diving at a muck site in PNG when this spectacular Blue-Ring Octopus darted in front of me, stopping at a coral head. At that time, I did not realize the risks in getting close to this animal — I was simply mesmerized by its changing colors. I learned later that the blue rings are only visible when they feel threatened. I wonder if it felt threatened by me or by the nearby cuttlefish in its hunting posture.