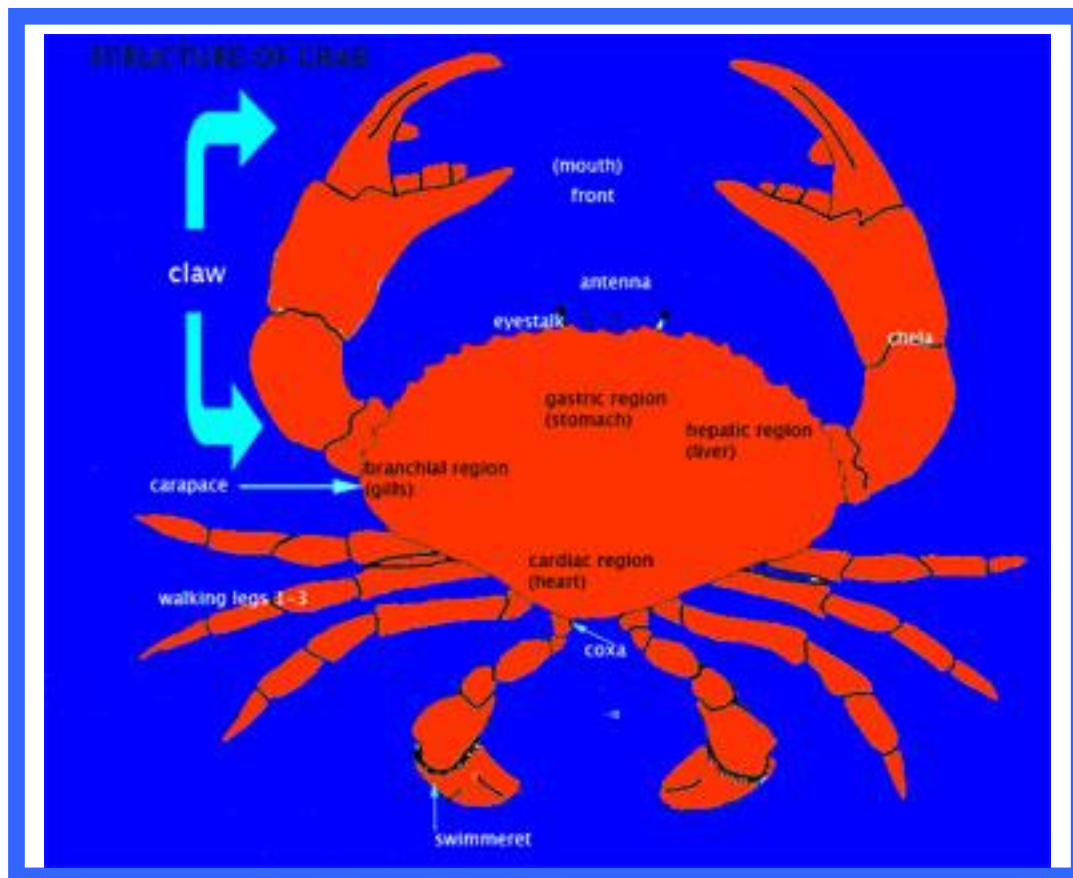


Crabs

Different species of crabs live in the mangroves according to the salinity and tidal flow.

STRUCTURE OF CRABS



Crabs belong to the Arthropoda or 'joint footed' animals. The skin of all Arthropods forms a hard protective shell, and the body is generally divided up into three parts, called the head, thorax and abdomen.

In crabs, the head and the thorax are joined together into one shell called the carapace. True crabs have five pair of legs, four pairs for walking and one pair called chelipeds which have the nippers. The nippers are used to pick up food and push it into the mouth part below the eyes.

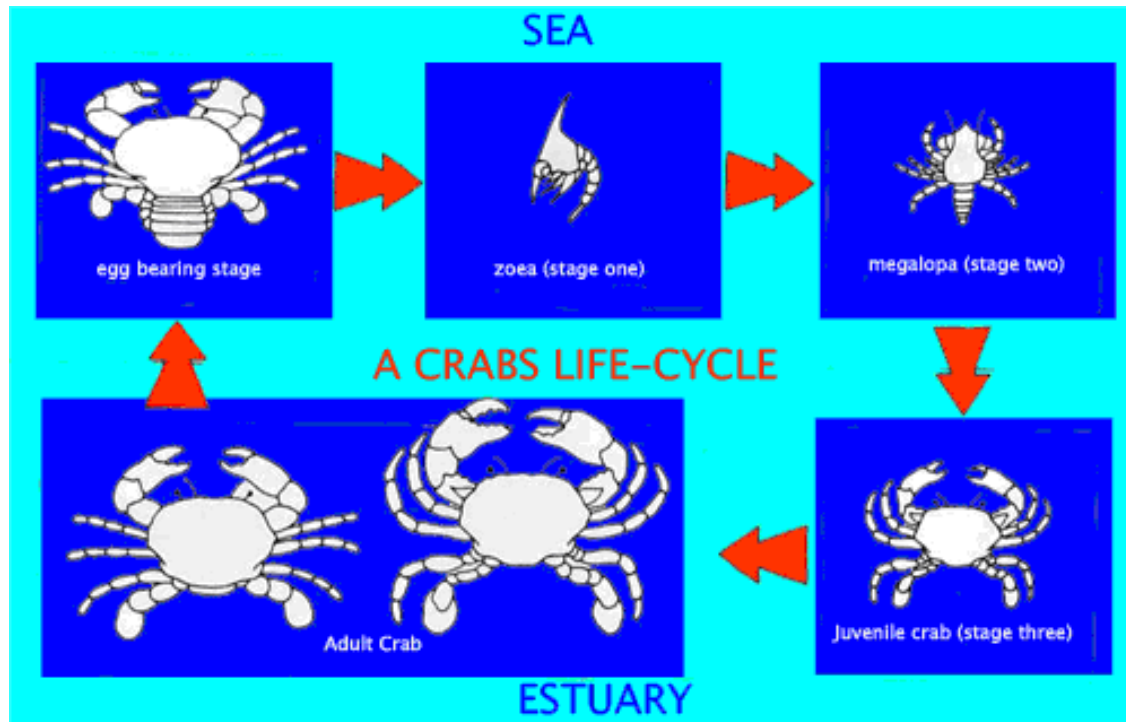
The abdomen of true crabs is reduced to a small flap that is folded under the carapace. If you look carefully at the underside of a crab you will see that the mouth is a complex structure of many moving parts.

Crabs have 360 degree range of vision with its eyes being on stalks. Although most crabs can live out of water for a certain amount of time, their gills must remain moist so they cannot be kept out of the moist environment for too long.

Crabs also react to stress so continual handling and an unnatural environment can kill crabs.

LIFE CYCLE

Baby crabs go through a number of larval stages before reaching adult form.



MOULTING

All crabs have a hard exoskeleton that protects the soft tissues and gives body support. The exoskeleton does not enlarge as the crab grows, so it must be discarded. (usually at night). The new shell takes a day or two before it hardens and during this time it is susceptible to predators. Shells are discarded several times a year. Crabs complete this process more often in their juvenile stage which is the rapid growth period.

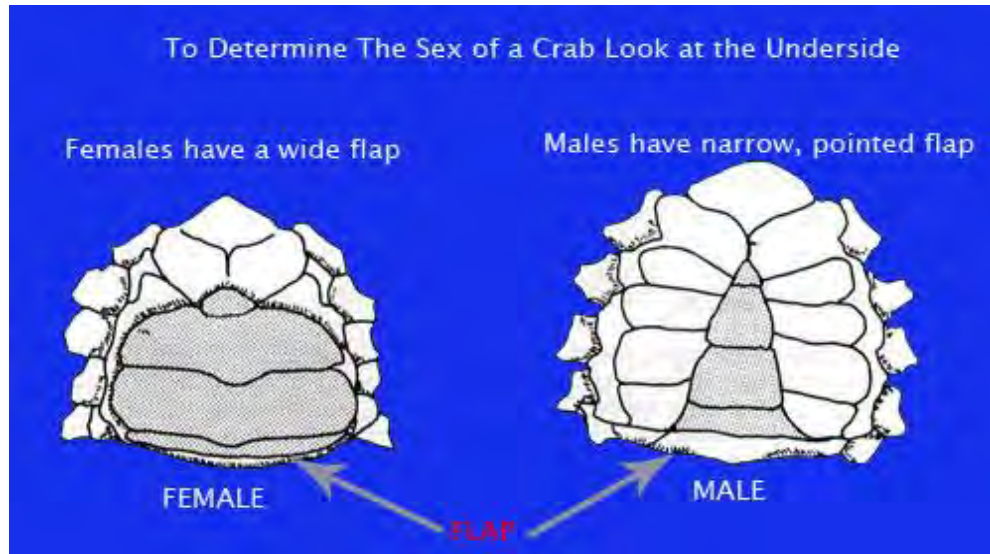


DIET

Detritus (disintegrated organic material) forms the main diet of most crabs, as well as, microscopic plant and animal life, decaying leaves, fish and algae.

MALES AND FEMALES

Determining the sex of a crab is quite easy. Looking at the underside of the crab you see a flap.

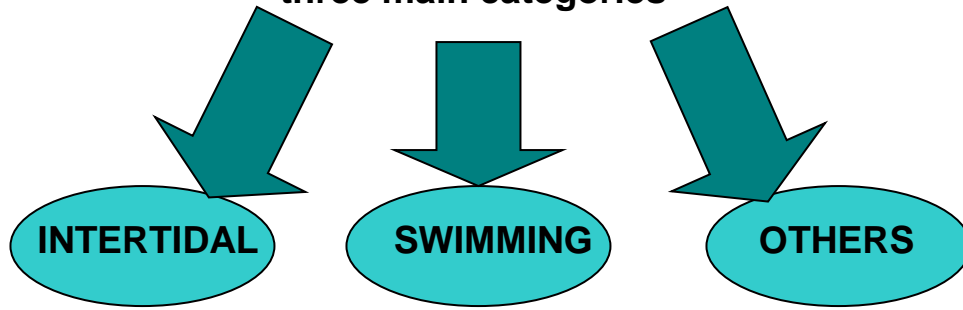


Females have a semi-circular shape and males a triangular shape.

HABITAT

Most crabs are found in burrows in mud or sand that take considerable time to excavate. If taken from their burrow or they decide to leave then they must occupy another hole or dig a new one.

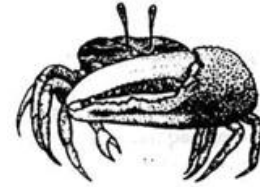
Crabs can be divided into three main categories



INTERTIDAL CRABS

Ocypodidae (Ocypods)

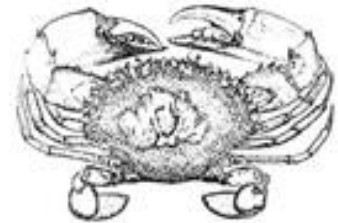
Grapsidae (Grapsids)



Characteristics : Long eye-stalks or Short eye-stalks
Found in sea water environments
Square shaped bodies

Examples: Long-eyed Crabs, Fiddler Crabs, Red-fingered marsh Crabs, Red Crabs, Semaphore Crabs, Ghost Crabs, Hairy-clawed Crabs, Bubble Crabs, Shore Crabs, Mottled Shore Crabs, Hairy Crabs

SWIMMING CRABS



Examples: *Portunus* Sand Crab or Blue Swimmer
Scylla Mud Crab

OTHER CRABS



Examples: *Thalassina Anomala* Mud Lobster,
Soldier Crab, *Ranina ranina* Spanner Crab,
Hermit Crab,