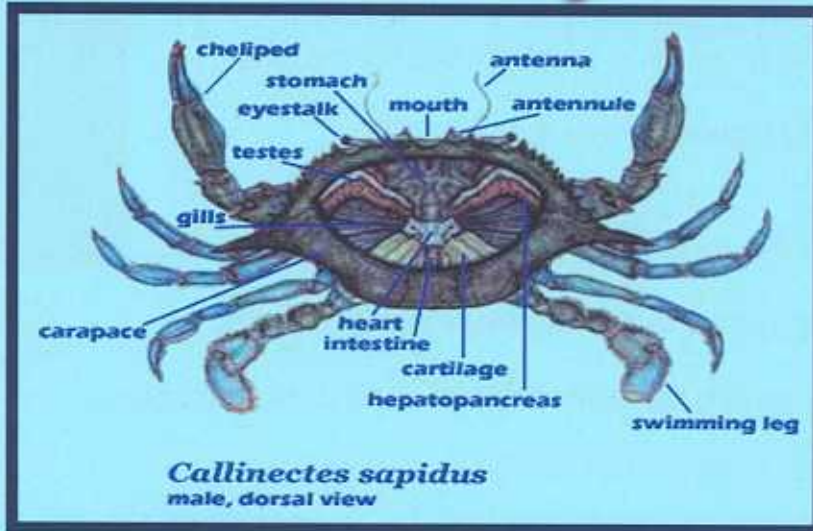





BLUE CRAB

Callinectes sapidus



source: <http://vims.edu/adv/ed/crab/guts3.html>

Identification:

-  Males abdomen is shaped like a golf tee; virgin females have triangular abdomen, gravid females have a rounded abdomen.
-  Last pair of legs are paddle shape.
 - Generally olive or bluish-green above, white below.
-  Adults have bright blue claws.

Size:

Shell lengths to 9 in. (225 mm). Live for 2-3 years.

Range:

Cape Cod to Uruguay.






Blue Crab Distribution in the United States

source: <http://www.blue-crab.org/regional.htm>



Local Distribution:





Blue Claw Crabs are year-round residents in New Jersey estuaries. They exhibit seasonal migrations in relation to spawning. Blue Claw inhabit shoal waters in spring and summer and move into deeper waters during autumn, where they spend the winter.

Habitat:








-  Found in depths as great 120 ft. (36 m).
-  Common in bays and estuaries where they often extend into freshwater.
-  Prefer muddy or clay bottoms and eel grass beds.

Spawning:

-  Occurs in late fall in the upper bay areas.
-  Females are inseminated in the fall, but fertilization is not complete.

-  In the spring females extrude the eggs and fertilize them with the stored sperm.
-  Eggs stay attached enmasse to the females abdomen.
-  Larvae go through an extensive period of development.
-  Young migrate into rivers and bays.




Growth:

-  Blue Claw Crabs have a short life span and grow by molting.
-  Molting occurs 18-22 times during their life.
-  When molting approaches they seek shelter in vegetated areas.
-  Molt by backing out of their shells.
-  Now they are completely soft and vulnerable to predators.
-  Within hours the new shell begins to harden and they can again protect themselves.
-  The soft shell crab supports a large industry.



Sponge Crab (Ovigerous female)
Photo courtesy of Thomas H. Shafer,
Univ. of North Carolina at Wilmington

Feeding:

-  Feed by ripping apart food with their front claws and passing it into their mouth.
-  Use their large first claws to capture prey.
-  Feed on plants, soft clams, young hard clams, soft shelled juvenile blue claw crabs and fishes.

BLUE CRAB DIP

Recipe by: Mindy McCadden
K-12 Program Coordinator, NJMSC

- | | |
|--|--------------------------|
| 16oz. cream cheese | 1 lb lump blue crab meat |
| 1 cup sour cream | 4 tablespoons mayonnaise |
| 1 tsp Old Bay seasoning | 1 tsp garlic salt |
| 1 tsp Worchester sauce | 1 tsp lemon juice |
| 1-2 tsp of grated sharp cheddar cheese | |



PRE-HEAT oven to 325 degrees

Mix all together, pour in 1 1/2 to 2 Qt. baking pan, sprinkle grated sharp cheese on top, cover with foil, bake for approx. 40 minutes. Sprinkle more Old Bay Seasoning to taste, serve with crackers, dipping bread or veggies.



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This fact sheet was produced by the New Jersey Sea Grant Extension Program and the Education Program at the New Jersey Marine Sciences Consortium. Visit us at www.njmssc.org
New Jersey Marine Sciences Consortium Building 22, Fort Hancock, Sandy Hook, NJ 07732

This publication was supported by the National Sea Grant College Program of the U.S. Department of Commerce's National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration under NOAA Grant #NA16RG1047. The views expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the views of any of these organizations. NJSG-05-589

Sea Grant