

Horseshoe crabs have existed in essentially the same form for the past 135 million years.

There are more than 42,000 species of crustaceans worldwide, almost all of which are marine.

Barnacles have no gills—gases are exchanged through cirri (feathery legs) and body walls.

The teeth of the lobster are in its stomach. The stomach is located a very short distance from the mouth, and the food is actually chewed in the stomach between three grinding surfaces called the "gastric mill".

Barnacles are hermaphroditic (they have both female and male sex organs), so they cross-fertilize with their next-door neighbours. Barnacles brood the fertilized eggs within their shells.

Ghost shrimp are hardy animals that can survive without oxygen for as long as six days.

Decorator crabs recycle their living decorations during the moulting process by removing them from their old shell and using them to decorate their new shell.

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Crabs and Crays



When crayfish and crabs grow, their hard shells can't expand as a human skin can, so they form a new one underneath the old. The old shell splits open and the animal emerges with a larger body and a brand new shell to fit it.

Although they look like limpets, barnacles are actually crustaceans, related to crabs and lobsters.

Camouflage crabs stick pieces of seaweed on the spines of their shell to disguise themselves from predators!

Mysid shrimps (which you might be able to see in the Seahorse tank) aren't really shrimp at all. They are actually more closely related to woodlice!

The heaviest crustacean ever found was a lobster weighing 19 kg, caught in 1934.

Other than the common red or green, lobsters are also found in white, yellow, red and sometimes even blue. Except for the white ones, they all turn red when cooked.

In human terms a barnacle has a penis over 18 metres in length in order to reach surrounding females.

Humans have three types of colour receptors (red, green, blue) in their eyes which, in various combinations, means we can see about 1200 different colours. The tropical mantis shrimp has twelve colour receptors (but no one knows how many colours it can see!).

Some kinds of hermit crabs carry a sea-anemone on their shell for protection. When the crab moves to a new shell, it transfers the sea anemone to its new home.

The largest crustacean is the Japanese spider crab. Individuals can measure 30-35cm across the body, with a claw span of 3 metres. There is a report of a crab weighing 6.4kg with a claw span of 4 metres.

Cement glands within the antennae produce the brown glue that fastens a barnacle to a hard surface. Acids and alkalis do not dissolve this incredibly strong glue that can hold the base of the shell to a surface long after the barnacle is dead. Dentists, interested in the adhesive power of this glue, have been trying to determine its properties.

The arms of squat lobsters' can grow to be several times their body length and they will sometimes steal food from sea anemones.

The horseshoe crab is more closely related to scorpions than crabs!

Crustaceans have two pairs of antennae, unlike insects, which only have one pair.

Pea crabs (the size of a pea) are the smallest crabs in the world.

A freshly laid lobster egg is the size of the head of a pin - 1.6mm.

The horseshoe crab's blood provides a valuable test for the toxins that cause septic shock, which previously led to half of all hospital-acquired infections and one-fifth of all hospital deaths.

The mantis shrimp has a "hammer-like" claw it uses to feed. It is reported to be one of the fastest movements in the animal kingdom. The strike has been clocked at four milliseconds. In captivity the mantis shrimp can break aquarium glass.

Lobsters have the ability to regenerate some of their body parts when amputated. For example, the claws, walking legs, and antennae.

A shrimp's heart is in its head.