



Ghost Crab (*Ocypode quadrata*)

Introduction

The old scientific name (*Ocypoda arenaria*) meant swift footed of the sand. They have adapted well to survive with their protective coloring, quickness, and burrowing ability. This makes up for their thinner crab shell. Most times all you see is a blur going by into their holes on the beach. They have been known to run as fast as 10 m.p.h (16 k.p.h.).

What do they look like?

They have a square white to tan body sometimes with purple markings with a lighter underside. They have dark periscope eyes that are mounted on stalks to see 360 degrees. They can retract their eyes into a groove on their head for protection.

How big are they?

Up to 3" (8cm), but their long legs make them look bigger

Where do they live?

They live on sandy beaches and have their burrows on the upper portion of the beach above the high tide line. Their tunnels can go down 4 feet (122cm) into the sand. They remain in their burrow during the winter. They must come out of their burrows to wet their gills in the water as they do not breathe air.

Who eats them?

They are eaten by gulls and raccoons

What do they eat?

They are omnivorous. Their diet includes: beach fleas, mole crabs, coquina clams, seaturtle hatchlings, dead flesh and beach debris. Their claws are serrated and sharp like a bread knife which enables them to shred many things they find to eat.

How do they mate?

They have a sponge stage like other crabs when all the fertilized eggs are being carried on the females abdomen. They deposit their eggs directly into the ocean . Ghost crab larvae become free floating zooplankton and as they change to become mature crabs they will emerge from the ocean to spend most of there lives on land.

People Interactions

They are usually scarce on beaches that are heavily used or raked though it is not unusual to see them skittering around on the beach, particularly at night. Their sharp claws can be dangerous and cut people if you try to pick them up.

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www.EstuaryLive.org

North Carolina National Estuarine Research Reserve

www.ncnerr.org or tel. 252.728.2170

Albemarle-Pamlico National Estuary Program

<http://www.apnep.org/> or tel. 252.946.6481

Carolina Estuarine Reserve Foundation

www.cerf.us

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