

Crabs

Crabs belong to a large group of animals known as crustaceans. These animals usually have a hard, shell-like skeleton. The shell that covers the body is called a carapace, and this protects the soft parts inside. The crab has five pairs of walking legs, which are jointed to help movement. The first pair of legs bears large pincers or claws. These are used for defence, feeding, and in some species for courtship display. They are also very strong and powerful, so be careful!

Velvet Swimming Crab

Necora puber Luaineachán



This crab gets its name from the velvet feel of its shell, and its paddle-like back legs, which are used for swimming. Its bright, red eyes and aggressive nature have earned it the nickname "red-eyed devil". The hairy carapace is wider at the front than at the back. The front edge is also deeply toothed, giving it a saw-like appearance. Usually dark grey to brown in colour, features to look out for are the dark blue-black lines

Edible Crab

Cancer pagurus Portán dearg



It is easy to recognise this red-brown crab, with the "pie crust" edging of its carapace, its small green eyes, and the black tips on its large pincers. These claws, which are used for defence and feeding, tend to be bigger on the male than on the female. The edible crab can tuck its legs underneath its body and partly bury itself among stones and pebbles, making it difficult to see. Those found on the shore are usually small, but much larger specimens are found in deep waters.

Common Shore Crab

Carcinus maenas Portán glas



This is the most common of all the crabs found on the shore. It has a mottled appearance, its colour varying from yellows to reds through browns and greens to black. These colours provide camouflage amongst seaweeds on the shore. The front of the carapace is deeply serrated like a saw and is much broader than the back. This crab is found under rocks and seaweed, on rocky and sandy shores and in shallow waters.

Common Hermit Crab

Pagurus bernhardus Faocha ghliomaigh



If you see a shell on legs moving quickly across the floor of a rockpool, what you may be seeing is a Common Hermit Crab. Unlike most, the hard carapace of this crab does not cover the whole body. To protect its soft abdomen it "borrows" an empty mollusc shell, moving to a larger one every time it grows. If disturbed, the hermit crab can retreat right into the shell and close the opening with its right pincer, which is much larger than the left.