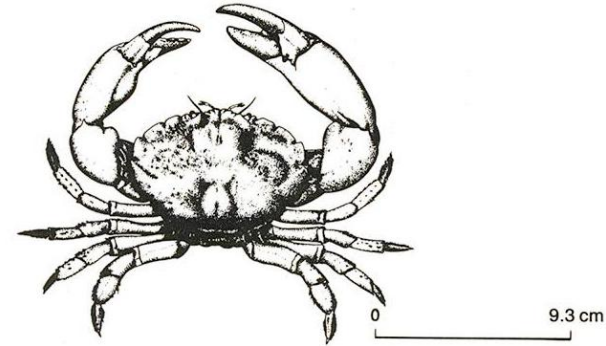




Stone crab

Menippe mercenaria
Cangrejo de piedra negro



Description

Range: The stone crab, a decapod crustacean of the family Xanthidae, is found in the western Atlantic from North Carolina to Florida and in the Gulf of Mexico to the Yucatan Peninsula. It is particularly abundant in southwest Florida and the Florida Keys.

Habitat: Juveniles live in estuaries among shell and rocky substrates, around pilings, and in grass flats. Maturing crabs move to deeper water in estuaries or nearshore waters where they may burrow in soft substrate or live among vegetation in rock crevices and wrecks to depths of 54 meters.

Feeding and Behavior: This benthic species is primarily carnivorous, but occasionally herbivorous. Molluscs, crustaceans, worms, seagrasses, and carrion along the bottom are preyed upon at night.

Reproduction: Spawning occurs offshore throughout adult areas from March to October, peaking in May and September. Zoeae are planktonic and require stable seawater salinities found offshore. Juveniles move into protected estuarine habitat, particularly those with extensive oyster bars.

Movement: Limited inshore-offshore migration related to mating and spawning have been noted. During winter months, adult stone crabs may seal themselves in their burrows.

Fisheries: Stone crabs are harvested commercially along the southwest coast of Florida from Tampa Bay to the Florida Keys, and particularly in the Everglades - Florida Bay area. Stone crabs are also caught commercially in Apalachee Bay, Florida, and off the western Yucatan Peninsula. Once trapped, one claw is removed from the crab before being released. Crab claws are marketed frozen. Recreational fishing for this species is limited to southwest Florida, particularly in the lower Keys.

References: Bert, T.M., R.E. Warner, and L.D. Kessler, 1978; Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council, 1980c; Powell, E.H., Jr., and G. Gunter, 1968; Powers, L.W., 1977; Sullivan, J.R., 1979.

- Adult Area (Year-round)
- Major Adult Area (Year-round)
- Nursery Area (Year-round)
- Migration (Spring)
- Migration (Fall)
- Commercial Fishing Ground (Fall, Winter, Spring)
- Commercial Fishing Ground (Year-round)

Spawning occurs offshore throughout adult areas from March to October.

References

Bert, T.M., R.E. Warner, and L.D. Kessler, 1978; Costello, T.J., pers. comm.; Heald, E.J., 1970; Powers, L.W., 1977.

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