

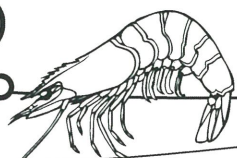
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Great Barrier Reef
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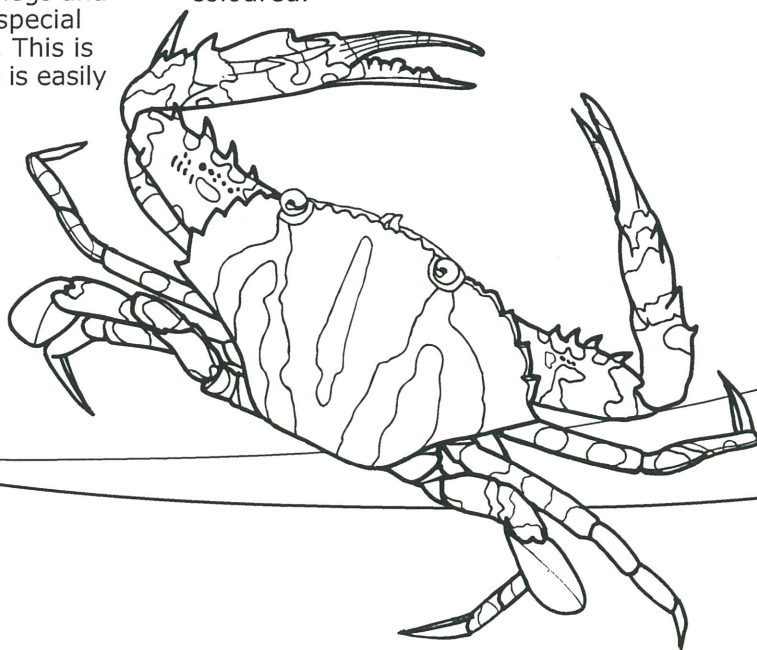
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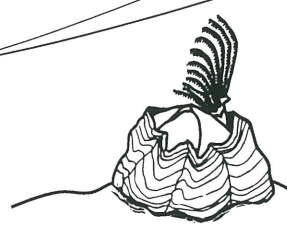
Crustaceans

- There are over 30,000 species of crustaceans on the Reef.
- Crustaceans include shrimps, crabs, crayfish and barnacles as well as many smaller and less well-known animals.
- Barnacles and anemone crabs use fine hairs on their appendages to filter food.
- If caught, crustaceans are able to quickly break off their appendages (arms, legs and claws) to get away, as they have special breaking-off points near the body. This is called autotomy. A new appendage is easily grown back.
- A crab will shed its shell when it is too small and will then grow a new and bigger one. Some crabs will use another animal's shell as its home while its shell is growing.
- Mantis shrimps can strike their prey at the speed of a bullet and they are difficult to keep in captivity because they can smash aquarium glass up to two centimetres thick.
- Some lobsters and crayfish are brightly coloured.



our great barrier reef
let's keep it great





Appearance

All crustaceans have a body covered with a protective shell composed of a horny substance called chiton. The outer skeleton is not continuous but made up of divided sections called somites. Crustaceans have a number of jointed legs, two pairs of antennae and sometimes a pair of 'nippers'. The body is divided into three parts: a head, a middle region (thorax) and a tail region (abdomen). Crustaceans cannot grow as many other animals do because of their outer skeleton. Instead they shed their outer skeleton, grow rapidly for a short time, and then form another hard skeleton. While this process is taking place they hide in an isolated place.

Habitat

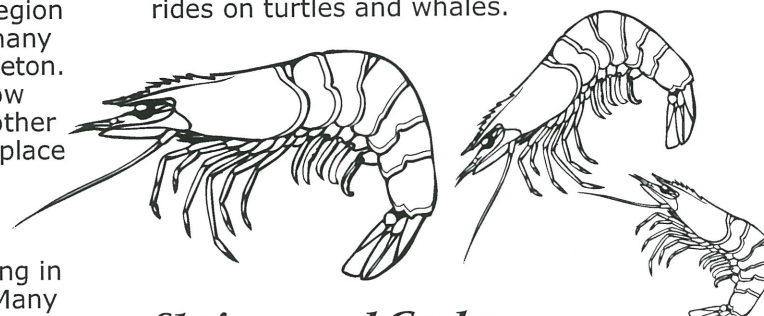
Crustaceans live in various habitats including in the ocean, fresh water and even on land. Many crustaceans are nocturnal and spend the day hidden in a burrow, buried in the sand or resting in a crevice.

Feeding

Crustaceans feed on many things, but mainly plants and the flesh of other animals. Some feed from the bottom of the ocean on anything they can find. Most large crustaceans are scavengers. The cleaner shrimp feeds on the mucus and parasites covering the skin and gills of fish.

Copepodods

Copepodods are the most common planktonic animals on the Reef. Copepodods are very small and are probably the most numerous animal group in the world.



Barnacles

There are about 100 species of barnacle living on the Reef. Once a barnacle has found space to live, it stays put. Pushing its legs out through a central hole in its cone-shaped shell, it spends its life lying on its back kicking food into its mouth. They live on hard surfaces including rocks, boat hulls and on other crustaceans, and even hitch rides on turtles and whales.

Shrimps and Crabs

About fifty per cent of all the mantis shrimps, krill and crabs in Australia are found on the Great Barrier Reef. There are at least 1030 species. Shrimps are among the most diverse and active animals on the Reef, performing a wide range of roles. Shrimps, along with crabs, crayfish and prawns, are characterised by having five pairs of walking legs, with the first pair modified to form pincers. Crabs come in many shapes, sizes and colours and have tentacles to feel their way around. Crabs live in their shells, under the water and on land. Crabs are scavengers, feeding on things that are dead or decaying. They will eat almost anything.

Lobsters and crayfish

This group of crustaceans has a confusing number of names including crayfish, cray, lobster, rock lobster and spiny lobster. Generally speaking, the name crayfish is used to describe large marine crustaceans without claws. Lobsters, on the other hand, have extremely large and well-developed claws.

