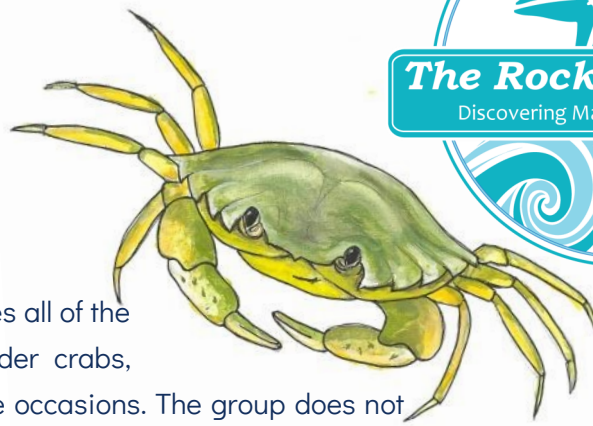


True Crabs



Brachyura

This group of charismatic crustaceans includes all of the classic 'crab-shaped' crabs, as well as spider crabs, which can also be found in rock pools on rare occasions. The group does not include other species with the word crab in their name such as hermit crabs and porcelain crabs.

How to find

During the daytime crabs are typically not active and hide from their predators. So looking under rocks is the way forward. Be careful not to hurt yourself or the wildlife when lifting rocks and make sure you put them back afterwards how you found them. In the UK the only true crabs species that can tolerate high shore conditions is the shore crab, which is also found throughout the intertidal zone. All the other species are mainly found in the low shore, so that's the area to focus on.

What's out there?

There are at least 15 species that have been found on UK rocky shores but many of these are very unlikely to be found. This card explains the key species to look out for in the South West. The shape of the shell covering the main body (the **carapace**) is often an important identification feature.

The Main Suspects



Shore crab

Carcinus maenas

- Carapace has 5 teeth either side
- Colour variable
- Low to high shore



Edible crab

Cancer pagurus

- Carapace has pasty crust edge
- Black tipped pincers
- Low shore



Velvet swimmer

Necora puber

- Carapace is hairy
- Red eyes & flat hind legs
- Aggressive behaviour when disturbed
- Low to mid shore

True Crabs

Brachyura

Other contenders



Montagu's crab

Xantho hydrophilus

- Carapace 'furrowed'
- Pincer tips often black
- Low shore



Risso's crab

Xantho pilipes

- Similar to Montagu's crab
- Legs much hairier
- Low shore



Risso's

Montagu's

The long shots



Hairy crab

Pilumnus hirtellus

- Very small (1.5cm carapace)
- Covered in bristles
- Unequal pincers
- Low shore



Spider crab

Maja brachydactyla

- Large (20cm carapace)
- Carapace & legs spiny
- Mainly subtidal



Long-legged spider crab

Macropodia rostrata

- Small and delicate
- Camouflages itself with algae
- Mainly subtidal, also found in low shore rockpools