

Carpilius corallinus (Batwing Coral Crab)

Order: Decapoda (Shrimps, Lobsters and Crabs)

Class: Malacostraca (Crustaceans: Shrimps, Sand-hoppers and Woodlice)

Phylum: Arthropoda (Arthropods)



Fig. 1. Batwing coral crab, *Carpilius corallinus*.

[<http://stuffpoint.com/tropical-fish-underwater-sea-life/image/461228/batwing-coral-crab-carpilius-corallinus-wallpaper/>, downloaded 27 March 2015]

TRAITS. *Carpilius corallinus*, the batwing coral crab, is the largest species of edible crab inhabiting mainly the central-western Atlantic region. They have a ground colour ranging from pale to brick red with scarlet spots and white or yellow spots forming meandering lines transitioning into a darker hue towards the tips of the claws. They have stalked eyes between which there are two antennae. They possess no marginal teeth with the exception of one blunt tooth approximately two thirds down its margin. The overall size of this crab species can range up to 12-15cm, with its 10 appendages or legs reaching a maximum of approximately 10cm long (Nasution, 2015).

DISTRIBUTION. *C. corallinus* is relatively widespread across the tropical waters of the central-western Atlantic (Fig. 2), off the coast of Florida straight to northern Brazil, inclusive of the Caribbean Sea and the Gulf of Mexico (MarineBio, 2015). They are mainly distributed on rocky rubble and coral reefs which are found in shallow areas usually at a depth range of 1-20m.

HABITAT AND ACTIVITY. *C. corallinus* seeks refuge in ideal marine habitats such as coral reefs and rocky rubble in shallow tropical waters. Researchers have observed that it is a common nocturnal species suggesting that they are active mainly at night during which it is able to feed (Wetzer et al., 2003). It is a common observation that they become fearful of human divers and would utilize their pinching claws for protection. This defence mechanism has proven to be painful for humans (Pictolife, 2015).

REPRODUCTION. During the reproductive cycle, the fertilized eggs are incubated while remaining adhered to the pleopods or the swimming legs of the females until they are ready to be hatched (MarineBio, 2015). Laboratory studies suggest that the gestation period is short, about one month. In an investigation by Laughlin et al. in 1983, a brief description of the larval development in *C. corallinus* was mentioned (Wetzer et al., 2003). These researchers concluded that this species passes through five zoeal larval stages; the megalopa stage of the five stages has yet to be discovered (Wetzer et al., 2003).

APPLIED ECOLOGY. *C. corallinus* can be described as a popular West Indian delicacy as it is a species that is greatly appreciated and in high demand. It can therefore be exploited in various sectors as a result of its advantageous characteristics such as its distribution and occurrence at an attainable depth for divers, its conspicuous coloration and its solitary behaviour. Such sectors include the fishing or commercial aquaculture industry for food and the local fishing and sporting industry (Pictolife, 2015). As a result, *C. corallinus* holds great economic potential.

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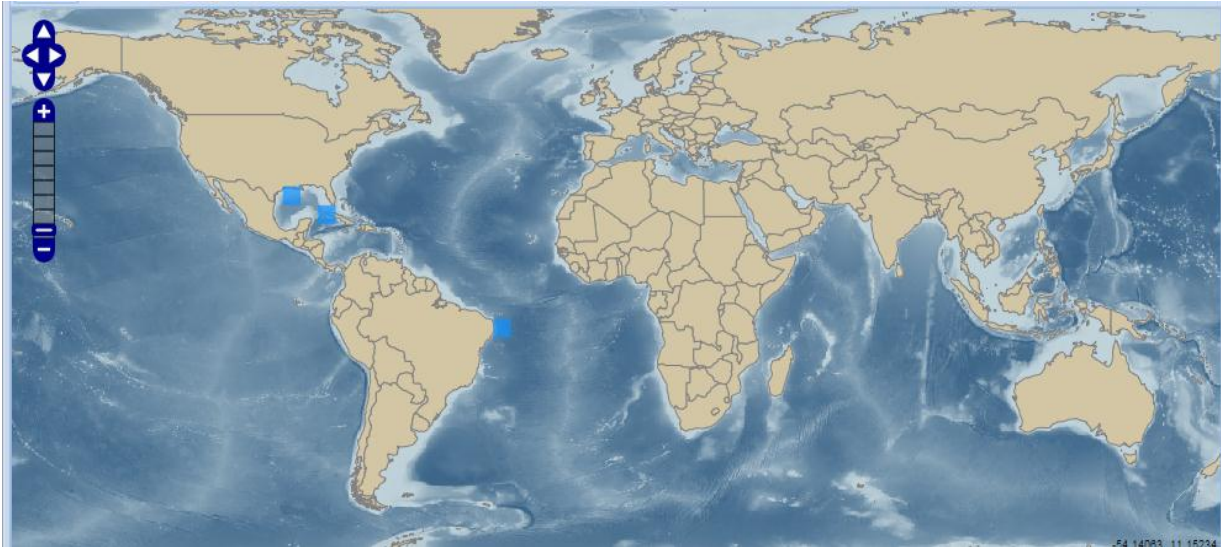


Fig. 2. Distribution of *C. corallinus*.

[<http://iobis.org/mapper/?taxon=Carpilius%20corallinus>, downloaded 27 March 2015]

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