North East Kent Marine Protected Area

Thanet Coast Project
working with people for coastal wildlife

Common names
Velvet Swimming Crab / Devil Crab

Scientific name
Necora puber


@Greg Bessant


@Tina Hubbard

- Flat carapace (shell) that appears brown with a velvet texture, despite being blue underneath. Characteristic red eyes and flattened back legs (to aid swimming) with blue stripes.
- Grow up to 10cm across
- Live up to 10 years
- Found on rocky shores in the intertidal zone and shallow water down to 70m
- Opportunistic predator that feeds on a wide array of prey including; mussels, crabs, limpets, fish, worms, sponges and barnacles
- Various birds often prey on this crab
- Mating occurs between July and November and the female carries sperm ‘plugs’ to enable her to fertilise successive clutches of eggs. Females produce between 5000 and 278000 eggs and brood them underneath their bodies (seen as orange clusters)
- Commonly found all around UK shores
- Red eyes lead to it’s common name of Devil Crab
- Very fast moving and aggressive species with strong pincers that can give a nasty nip!

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Description
Blue in colour but is covered in brown pubescence with red prominences, has a velvety texture and red eyes leading to it's various common names. Flattened carapace, which is wider than it is long. Length 80mm or less, carapace bears 8-10 small teeth between eyes of which the middle two are the longest.

Habitat and shelter
Found on rocky shores in the intertidal zone and shallow water down to 70m. Preferring sand/gravel habitats for moulting and reproduction.

Feeding
Opportunistic predator that will feed on a wide array of prey items if available including; mussels, crabs, limpets. Gastropods, gastropod egg cases, fish, echinoderms, sponges, barnacles, polychaetes and occasionally brown seaweeds. Juvenile crabs feed on small crabs and barnacles. It is hunted by numerous bird species.

Reproduction
The UK's breeding period is July - November when both sexes synchronise their hormonal activity. Mating behaviour involves a pre-copulatory courtship ritual through olfactory and tactile cues, there is usually indirect sperm transfer, the sperm is stored using sperm plugs on the females which enable her to fertilise successive clutches of eggs later in the season. Females have fecundity ranges of 5000-278000 eggs, increasing with females size. Females brood eggs by carrying them on the underside of their bodies, these eggs are released as zoea larva. After several months in the sea the zoea settles on the seabed as an immature adult where it moults until it's mature.

Additional information
Not threatened, previously a pest and bycatch for the lobster fishery, until commercially fished for foreign markets when Spanish stocks were over exploited in the 1980s.

Fun facts
The 1st pair of walking legs bear strong pincers, last joint of back leg is flat and rounded acting as a swimming paddle. Fast moving and very aggressive. Can live up to 10 years with the right conditions. Seaweeds become more prevalent in their diet the older they get.

References
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