



Cabrillo  
Marine  
Aquarium

# FISHIN' FOR F.A.Q.'S

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## California Crabs

### Fun Facts

The three main types of Rock crab found along the California coast are the red, brown & yellow. The red rock crab is brick red in color, the brown rock crab is dark brown with red spots, and the yellow rock crab is light brown to pale yellow with no spots.

Most crabs are *omnivores* as they will eat a wide variety of algae and other sea animals.

### Just for Laughs

**Q.** Why did the crab keep all the seaweed for itself?

**A.** Because it was shellfish!

**Q.** How many legs does a crab have compared to the lobster?

**A.** Crabs have 8 legs and 2 claws, for a total of 10 *appendages*. The two legs in the back are “swim paddles” and the remaining six are “walking legs”, while their claws are mainly for feeding and defense.

**Q.** Do crabs have eyes?

**A.** Yes, crabs have two *eye stalks* with eyes located at the top. Most species have good eyesight and can quickly seek the protection of a crack or the underside of a rock when threatened.

**Q.** Do crabs molt like lobsters?

**A.** Yes, crabs and lobsters in order to grow must shed their hard outer shell (*exoskeleton*)

periodically. This process is called *molting*. The crab will make a small crack in its shell and literally crawl out of its bones! The newly emerged crab is very *vulnerable* at this stage of its life-cycle & will be vulnerable to predators until its new *exoskeleton* hardens, which can take several days.

### At CMA

Striped shore crabs are usually found at the Aquarium in tank Number 1.

**Q.** Is it true that some crabs can grow bigger than people?

**A.** Believe it or not, meet the largest crab in the world — the *Giant Japanese Spider Crab* — weighing up to 40 pounds and reaching up to 18 feet from claw to claw. This gi-normous specimen of a *crustacean* can grow to triple the size of the average man!

## Fast Facts on a Local Species

**Common name:** Striped Shore Crab

**Scientific name:** *Pachygrapsus crassipes*

**Range:** from Vancouver Island to Baja California, Mexico

**Size:** its carapace can reach 4–5 cm

**Diet:** feeds on films of algae and diatoms growing on the rocks in tidepools

**Life cycle:** egg to larva, juvenile to adult

**Average lifespan:** average lifespan is about 3 years

**Natural predators:** gulls, octopus, sea otters, sharks & raccoons

**Types of Crabs found in Southern California :** kelp crab, sheep crab, fiddler crab & pacific rock crabs

