



Red Clawed Crabs (*Perisesarma bidens*)

These Crabs Are Easy to Get Caught With Red Clawed!

Also known as the Red Crabs, or Mangrove Crabs, Red clawed crabs are a species of small, saltwater to brackish (mixture of fresh and saltwater) or marine crabs found across the Indo-Pacific region of Africa, Asia, and Australia. These crabs consist of about 23 species that may vary in their size, color, and shape. These crabs utilize foraging behavior using one or both of their claws to sift through the sand or substrate. It is also widely believed that these crabs play an important role in their tidal brackish to marine environments through their sifting feeding behavior, which in turn aerates the substrate and prevents anaerobic conditions. These crabs communicate and interact with one another by claw waving and other gestures and actions. Males are also sexually dimorphic in their color intensity and size, and will also use their large claws during combat over territorial and/or mating disputes. Also as with most crabs, red clawed crabs will periodically shed their hardened exoskeletons through a process of molting, and during, and immediately after this time, are soft bodied and vulnerable to predation, and are thereby more secretive. Claws and/or limbs can also be lost periodically as well, in which case, will regrow following their next molts. Red clawed crabs are becoming commonly available in the pet trade, where they can make for hardy and inexpensive pet invertebrate species to maintain under the correct conditions.

Taxonomy

Life: All living, physical, and animate entities

Domain: Eukaryota

Kingdom: Animalia

Phylum: Arthropoda

Subphylum: Crustacea

Class: Malacostraca

Order: Decapoda

Infraorder: Brachyura

Family: Sesarmidae

Genus: *Perisesarma*

Species: *Perisesarma bidens**

**Taxonomy subject to change and revision.*

Lifespan and Longevity

If provided the correct care and setup, red clawed crabs may live 3 to 5 years in captivity.

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Distribution and Habitat

Red clawed crabs can be found on beaches, lagoons, swamps, and other inter tidal freshwater to brackish coastal wetlands of the Indo-Pacific, from Africa, Asia, and Australia including to the Fijian islands.

Conservation Status

Not Evaluated for the IUCN Red List (NE) or otherwise Data Deficient (DD).

Legal and Regulatory Status (*Subject to Change)

Consult with your local, municipal, and state ordinances and regulations for any ownership restrictions.

Experience Level Required

Novice/Beginner to Intermediate/Moderate.

Size

Red clawed crabs are small to medium sized crabs, which can reach, as adults, 2 to 4 ½”.

Housing and Enclosure

While there is debate as to whether these red clawed crabs are truly freshwater or brackish water species, these crabs require either a freshwater or brackish water setup, as well as access to dry land or other areas they can emerge from the water. Water salinity can be measured using a store purchased hydrometer, and should read at around a neutral pH of 7.5 to 8.2. Using varying amounts of commercially available aquarium salt can adjust this accordingly. Red clawed crabs should be housed in a secure, sturdy, adequately ventilated terrarium, aquarium, or other enclosure. These crabs may be kept communally, meaning they are often found in groups, and multiple crabs can be housed together provided an adequately sized enclosure is accordingly provided, although males may fight. A 10 to 20 gallon or similar sized enclosure or larger depending on the number of crabs maintained is suitable. Crabs that are not provided adequate space may fight and possibly kill one another for resources. A substrate that enables these crabs to dig and burrow, as well as maintain adequate humidity should also be provided. Sand substrates as well as fine aquarium gravel and mixtures thereof can be used for added security and stimuli including driftwood, artificial foliage, and hides in the form of log or slab hides, rocks, clay flower pots, or other commercially designed hides and cage decor.

Temperature, Lighting, and Humidity

Adequate humidity is perhaps one of the most important factors for maintaining red clawed crabs, which should be around 70%. A temperature gradient should also be provided in the enclosure, with around 70 to 85 degrees F for ambient and water temperatures. Crabs that are exposed to direct sunlight or heat constantly may overheat. For any supplemental heating that may be needed, use a low wattage UVA/UVB and/or incandescent bulb, radiant or ceramic heat emitter, or under tank heating element (or UTH). More specific lighting, heating, and humidity product suggestions and recommendations that can best suit one's needs, as well as those of one's animals can be given as well.

Feeding, Diet, and Nutrition

Detritivorous to Omnivorous; In the wild, red clawed crabs are primarily omnivorous scavengers, feeding on any tiny bits of organic plant and animal matter they are able to locate and consume during foraging including small fish, crustaceans, other invertebrates, plant material, and vegetable or fruit material.

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In captivity, a varied, rotating, varied diet for these crabs is recommend. Many commercially available fish and crab foods and diets are available, including algae disks, sinking pellets, commercially available crab and fish foods, and other diets, with some being better and more suitable than others. It is always a good idea to read and understand any labels and ingredients on any such diets that may be used. Red clawed crabs will also eat freeze dried plankton, krill, bloodworms, or shrimp as well. Some chopped fruits and vegetables can also be given. Further information on what constitutes a suitable vs. unsuitable crab diet can be provided upon request. More specific dietary and supplementary product suggestions and recommendations that can best suit one's needs, as well as those of one's animals can be given as well.

Handling

Red clawed crabs can be handled carefully, although they may pinch (which is not painful or dangerous). They can be allowed to walk on one's hands. Care should be taken to not drop them, however, since this can fracture their shell and/or cause internal injury to them. Overall though, handling these crabs is not necessary or required.

****Also be sure to practice basic cleanliness and hygiene associated with proper husbandry after touching or handling any animals or animal enclosures to prevent the possibility of contracting salmonellosis or any other zoonotic pathogens****

Contact

Authored by Eric Roscoe. For any additional questions, comments, and/or concerns regarding this animal, group of animals, or this care sheet, please email and contact the Madison Area Herpetological Society at info@madisonherps.org

Disclaimer: Note that the information provided in these, or any care sheets, are not intended to be all-exhaustive, and further research and care should always be sought and provided when it comes to any species one may prospectively be interested in. These care sheets are also not intended to serve as substitutes for professional veterinary medical care and husbandry should any animal require it. Always seek proper and professional veterinary care for any animal should the need arise, and be prepared ahead of time for any and all husbandry costs and expenses that may occur with any animal beyond the initial purchase. Any animal owned is ultimately a matter of personal/individual care and responsibility. MAHS cannot make any claims or guarantees regarding any information in this care sheet therein. This care sheet may be reprinted or redistributed only in its entirety, including any and all MAHS logos and disclaimers.

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