



Oregon Sea Grant Extension
Sustainable Tourism &
Outdoor Recreation Program

Interpretative Fact Sheet

Red Rock Crab (*Cancer productus*)



The following short article is from the [Oregon Coast 101 Species](#) collection used by the Guide and Outfitter Recognized Professional (GORP) training program. These articles are intended to provide interesting facts you can share with your clientele and add value to your services.

An Interpretive Fact Sheet has been written about each species. We are currently uploading these blogs and creating the links.

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Tourism and Business Development College of Business,
Oregon State University Extension - Oregon Sea Grant at

<http://tourism.oregonstate.edu/>

Guide and Outfitter Recognized Professional Program

<https://www.GORPguide.org>

For more information about the GORP training program see:

<https://www.gorpguide.org/become-a-gorp-certified-guide>

Red Rock Crab (*Cancer productus*)

 tourism.oregonstate.edu/red-rock-crab-cancer-productus/

By colliiek2

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What is red with 10 legs? A Red Rock Crab!

Red Rock Crabs are native, plentiful, have very liberal bag limits, and are great eating. Dungeness crab are be larger and more meaty, but have significantly lower bag limits.



Photo courtesy of ODFW

Identifying

These feisty crabs are deep, brick red. Their large red claws are tipped in black, and their body is a wide fan-shape. They can grow 10-inches across or more. Typical sizes are 7-inches for males and 5-inches for females. The farther north, the darker the shell.

Red Rocks are ‘walking crabs’ where all of the legs look similar. The back legs on some crabs have flippers making them a ‘swimming crabs’ (such as the Eastern blue).

Territory and Habitat

Red Rock Crabs inhabit mid-intertidal waters up to about 260 feet from Alaska to Baja California. They are common to Coos, Yaquina, and Tillamook bays that contain rocky substrates.

Rock crabs prefer rocky areas, pilings, and other structures. They favor larger, salty estuaries, eelgrass, soft-bottom habitats, and shellfish beds.

They pinch!

These crabs are mean and will pinch hard! They prey on hard-shelled clams and oysters—Your fingers are no match to those hard shells. Note: They also have teeth. Consider their defenses as they are a favorite prey for the giant Pacific octopus.

Avoid harvesting in months that don't have the letter "r" in the name.

Harvesting

Before you go: Call Oregon Dept. of Agriculture shellfish safety info hotline at (800) 448-2474 or visit the ODA shellfish closures web page (<http://ODA.direct/ShellfishClosures>). This site has updates on several different types of seafoods including crab, clams, mussels, and scallops. It covers are from the mouth of the Columbia River to the California border. There are maps, bag limits, closures, and potential warnings, etc.

Catch both Dungeness and Red rock crabs using the same technique.

The crab legs have a lot of meat, like most crabs. Extracting Red rock crab body meat is more challenging because the crab is smaller. There are different cooking techniques that can take advantage of this difference. See the Spruce Eats (<https://www.thespruceeats.com/pacific-red-and-rock-crabs-1300653>) for ideas.

REFERENCES and INFORMATION RESOURCES:

- Oregon Dept. of Fish and Wildlife, Red Rock Crab (<https://myodfw.com/crabbing-clamming/species/red-rock-crab>) and Crabbing and Clamming Report (<https://myodfw.com/recreation-report/crabbing-clamming-report/marine-zone>)
- Wikipedia, Red Rock Crab (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cancer_productus)