

# Blue Swimmer Crab



## Description

The blue swimmer crab is a powerful swimmer, avid hunter and scavenger. It is commonly referred to as 'Blue Manna' or 'Bluey' due to its blue color in appearance. It is also recognized by its carapace which is an outer shell that protects its body, its flat, disc-shaped hind legs which are used as paddles for swimming and its strong claws. The blue swimmer crab has the ability to grow to a crawl span of 80 centimetres and are known to weigh up to 1 kilogram. The females are a duller green/brown colour and have a more rounded carapace.

## Diet & Habitat

The blue swimmer crab can be found most commonly in Western Australia between Port Hedland and Dunsborough. It lives in sandy, muddy, algal and seagrass habitats in estuaries, sheltered bays and offshore waters up to 50 metres in depth. The blue swimmer crab hides beneath the sand with only their eyes above ready to launch at prey during the day whilst at night they become mobile and search for food using water currents. The crab's diet consists of small fish, molluscs, worms, algae, seagrass and small crustaceans.

## **Scientific name**

*Portunus armatus*

## **Other names**

Blue Manna Crab

Blue Crab, Bluey

## Social Life

They are independent for the duration of their life span which is usually 2-3 years. However during mating the male and female blue swimmer crabs will stay together for up to 15 days. Female crabs produce huge amount of eggs between 180,000 and 2 million although most of these will not survive to become adult crabs.

## Threats

Blue swimmer crabs when larvae, are vulnerable to small fish and sea jellies. Once as adults, they are prey for various fishes and birds as well as other blue swimmer crabs. The biggest threat to the crab is humans. The blue swimmer crab is a popular food in Australia and is caught in large numbers with both recreational and commercial fishers catch thousands of tonnes per year around Australia. There are various protection measures in place to ensure the sustainability of the blue swimmer crab populations with area closures as well as bag, boat and size limits in place.

## **Did you know?**

When female blue swimmer crabs lay eggs they attach to hairs in a spongy mass under the female's abdomen until the eggs mature and are then released. This is indicated when they change colour from orange to black.

