

A Day in the Life of the Hudson River Creatures Reference Guide:
Use this sheet as a reference when identifying seashore creatures commonly found throughout the Hudson River Estuary.

Marine Arthropods: Crustaceans characterized by their armor-like exoskeleton, segments: head, thorax, abdomen (often fused- carapace).

Blue Crab (freshwater, brackish, saltwater)



Total length 5-8 inches

Blue color on claws, legs, and swimmerets.

*Aggressive - handle with care. To check sex grasp pinchers closed or grab at back shell between swimmerets.



Refer to abdomen to ID female vs. male.

Mud Crab (freshwater & brackish-under debris and rocks)

White-fingered



National Audubon Society Field Guide to Seashore Creatures

*Actual size. Carapace width 19 mm.

Light color on tips of pincers.

Lady Crab (saltwater-sandy-muddy bottoms)



Carapace width 3 inches.

Tan coloration with dark red ring like spots throughout body.

Last pair of legs contains swimmerets.

Light brown pincers with blue tips.

**Aggressive-handle with care.*

Asian Shore Crab (saltwater-intertidal zone, under rocks)



carapace width 1.5 inches.

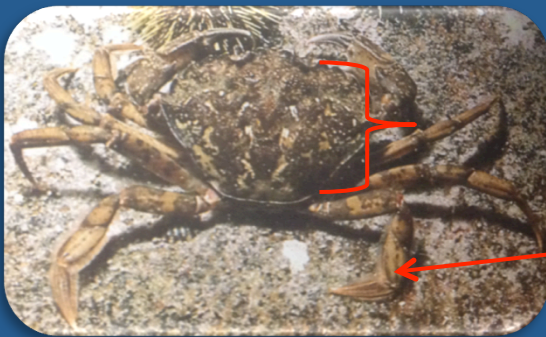
Flat square shaped carapace.

3 spines along side of carapace.

Dark coloration with light and dark banding across legs.

Red spots throughout pincers.

Green Crab (saltwater & brackish-intertidal zone, rocky shores and mud banks)



Fan shaped carapace.

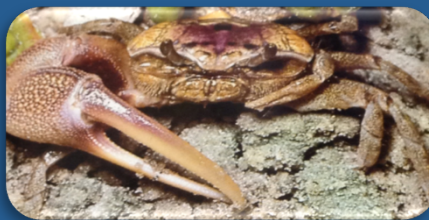
5 spines along front of carapace.

5th set of legs does not have swimmerets.

Fiddler Crab (saltwater & brackish-muddy areas)



Males: One large pincer and one small pincer.



Sand Fiddler

Purple coloration towards front of carapace and pincers.



Brackish-water Fiddler

Grayish-brown coloration. Red on joints of pincers.

Mole Crab (saltwater)



Often called sand crabs these small crab burrow in the sand in the surf zone on ocean beaches and use antennae to filter feed.

*Total length ½-1 inch.

Crayfish (freshwater-muddy bottoms)



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Total length 2-4 inches.

Body similar to a lobster but found in freshwater areas and smaller in size.

*There are several invasive species throughout NY State.

Scud (found throughout estuary-rocky and weedy areas, along bottom)



Photo by Eric Linn

Total length 1/2 inch.

Similar to shrimp with arched body and flattened sides.

Often referred to as “side swimmers,” swims in circles.

Isopod

(found throughout estuary-nearshore, under rocks or leaf litter, or in weedy areas)



7 armor plates with a pair of walking legs coming from each.

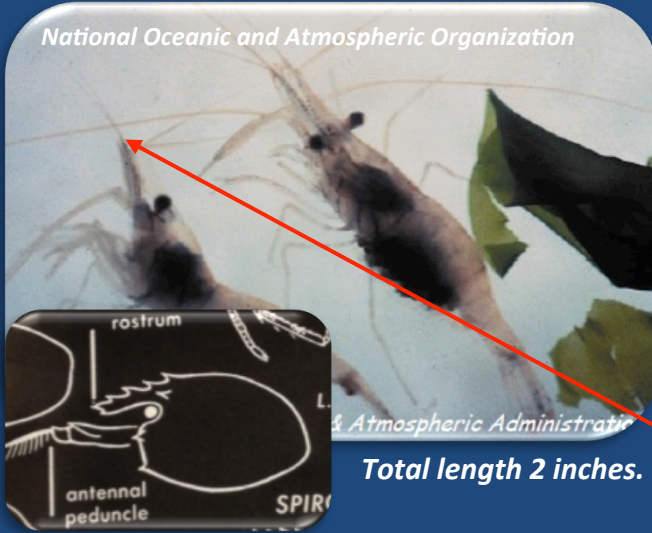
2 pairs of antennae.

Grass shrimp

is a collective name for three species of small shrimp found in the salty and brackish waters of the lower Hudson River, including two species of shore shrimp and sand shrimp.

-Tom Lake NYS DEC Naturalist

Shore Shrimp (saltwater & brackish-nearshore, sandy bottoms and weedy areas)



Pale & transparent with dark streaks.

First two pairs of legs have pincers at ends. 2nd pair is longest.

Rostrum toothed, extends past antennae.

Sand Shrimp (saltwater & brackish- nearshore, sandy bottoms and weedy areas)



Transparent to pale gray with black spotting throughout body.

Camouflage with sandy sediment.

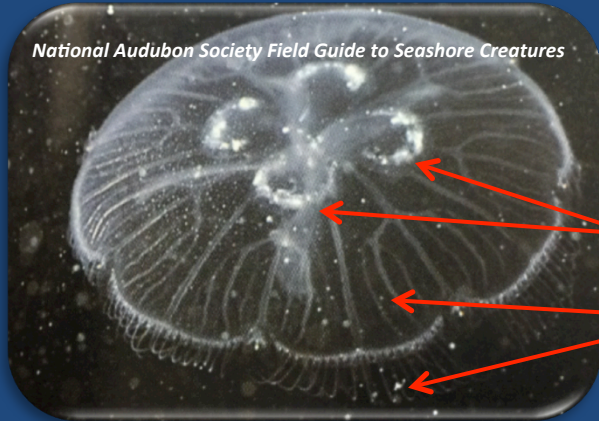
Subchelate pincer on first pair of legs. Subchelate tooth on middle of carapace.

Short rostrum.

Sea Jellies & Jelly-like animals: Body is a tube or saucer shape, radially symmetrical surrounded by tentacles.

Moon Jelly-cnidarians

(saltwater & brackish- surface, near shore)



Translucent or whitish coloration with a round/ saucer shape.

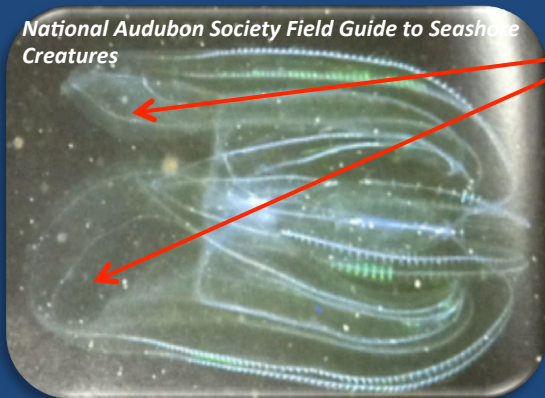
**Contains stinging cells.*

4 Horseshoe shaped gonads

8 marginal lobes with many short fringelike tentacles.

Leidy's Comb Jelly- ctenophore

(saltwater & brackish water, low salinities-shallows)



Two long lobes longer than body.

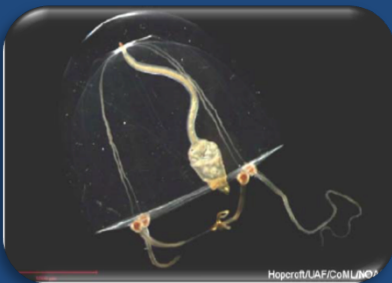
Oval shape, transparent, iridescent, bioluminescent.

**No stinging cells.*

Total length 4 inches.

Hydromedusa- hydrozoan

(saltwater & brackish-seasonal coastal habitats)



Transparent bell shaped body with tentacles present.

**Some contain stinging cells.*

Total diameter .25 inches.

Bivalve Mollusks: soft bodied animal with a hard-outer shell, 2 shells.

Zebra Mussel

(freshwater-attached to hard surfaces or slow moving aquatic fauna)

USGS Archive, USGS, Bugwood.org



Tan/ beige shell with dark brown zig-zag striping throughout.

* Invasive species.

Total length 1-2 inches.

Atlantic Oyster (saltwater & brackish-coastal waters, all sediments)



Irregularly oval to elongate shell, smooth with radial ridges.

Shell margins are smooth and sharp.

* You may find shells along the shoreline.

Total length 3-5 inches.

Quahog (saltwater & brackish-coastal waters, sandy-muddy bottoms)



Clam shell is pale brown with purple stain on interior.



Total length 5 inches, 4.25 inches wide.

Pearly Mussel (freshwater-buried in sandy or gravel sediments)



Total length 6 inches.

23 species reside in the Hudson River.

Oval shape with light brown- dark coloration.

Zebra mussels often utilize these as substrate.

Fingernail Clam (freshwater-buried in sand or mud sediment)



Total length .75 inches.

23 species found throughout the Hudson River.

Thin pale brown shell.

Rangia (brackish (5-15ppt))



<http://fl.biology.usgs.gov/>

Shells ~ 3 inches

Native to the gulf of Mexico & introduced into the lower Hudson, first identified here in 1988.

Adults prefer high turbidity and soft muddy sediments.



Hudson River
Estuary Program

A Program of the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation

Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory
COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY | EARTH INSTITUTE

Blue Mussel (salty to brackish areas)



<http://www.fishwatch.gov/>

Total length 3 inches

Smooth, triangular shape shell, blue black outside, violet blue inside, smooth shell.

Use byssal threads to attach to rocks, pilings.

Ribbed Mussel (salty marshes, buried in sediment)



<http://nynjbaykeeper.org>

Shells ~2 to 4 inches

Often attached to plants.

Crustaceans

Barnacles (saltwater & brackish- nearshore, attached to hard substrates)



National Audubon Field
Guide to Seashore Creatures

Size varies

White-gray coloration with many interlocking plates. Attaches to hard surfaces cementing forehead. Ring of plates protects body. Opens trap door to filter feed.

Often found in clusters attached to rock substrate in intertidal zone.