

ARTHROPODS

# Crustaceans

Domain	Eukaryota
Kingdom	Animalia
Phylum	Arthropoda
Subphylum	Crustacea

500 MYA – PRESENT

Crustaceans are a large group of mostly marine or freshwater animals belonging to the phylum Arthropoda. The subphylum includes crabs, crayfish, lobsters, yabbies, prawns, krill, barnacles, and slaters. The body of a crustacean is divided into three sections, a head shield, a thorax of several segments,

and an abdomen. In some species, such as crabs, the head and thorax may be fused into a single unit called a cephalothorax. Crustaceans have numerous pairs of jointed legs, and like insects, most have compound eyes made up of numerous lenses.

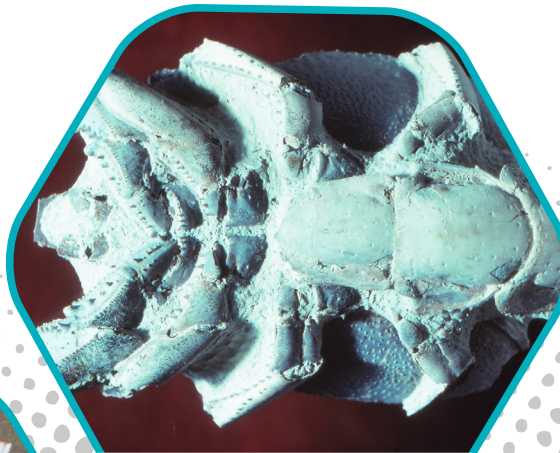
## Fossil Record

Crustaceans first appear in the fossil record in rocks from the middle Cambrian. Isopods (the order to which slaters belong) first appear in the Carboniferous, prawns appear in the Triassic, crabs in the Jurassic, and crayfish in the Cretaceous. There was a great diversification of crustaceans in the Cretaceous, which in turn, may have been caused by a diversification of their main predators, osteichthyes – bony fish.

## Habitat and Lifestyle

Most crustaceans are free-living marine or freshwater animals, but some, like slaters, live on land. One subclass, barnacles, live cemented to rocks, often in intertidal zones.

Barnacles filter food particles out of seawater with feathered modified legs called cirri. Other crustaceans filter food particles out of seawater, eat algae, other invertebrates, and even small vertebrates.



Crayfish, *Thalassina* sp., Pleistocene (about 2 million years old), Queensland. Image from Jim Frazier.



Barnacles encrusted on a glass bottle. Image from sarangib, pixabay.

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## ? DID YOU KNOW

The largest crustacean on Earth is the Japanese spider crab, with a leg span of up to 4 m and weighing as much as 20 kg!

