

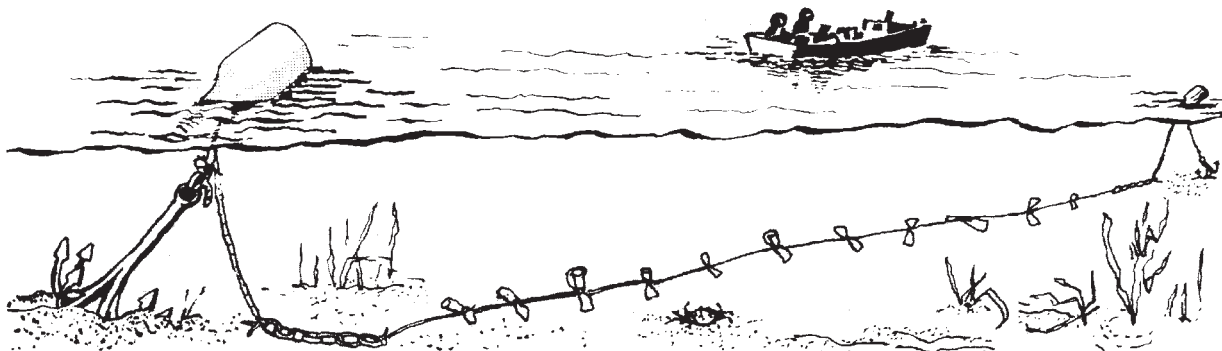
FACT SHEET

Blue Crab Anatomy

- The blue crab has a hard shell called a carapace. The carapace may be a variety of colors – olive, brown, dull red, or varying shades of blue.
- Its eyes are like those of insects. They rest on short stalks, which allow the crab to see in almost any direction.
- The blue crab has five pairs of legs! The first pair of legs ends in sharp claws. These claws are used to capture and hold food. They are also used for protection. The next three pairs are used for walking. The last pair of legs look like small flattened paddles lined up in a row. The blue crab uses these paddle legs to swim, an ability that not all crabs have. The legs of male crabs are bluish-gray in color, while the tips of the female legs are a reddish-orange color. Because of this, some people say that the female crab “paints her fingernails.”
- Are there other ways to tell the difference between male and female crabs?



Take a look on the next page.

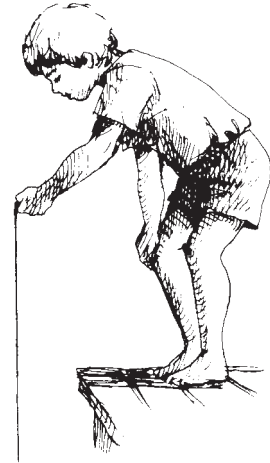


Blue Crab Anatomy

Which is Which?

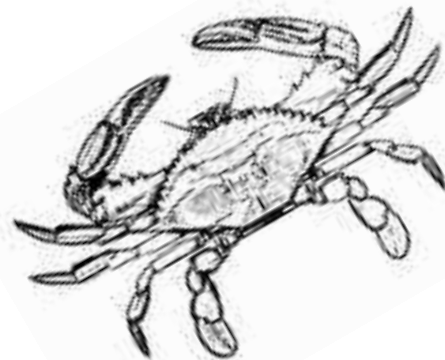
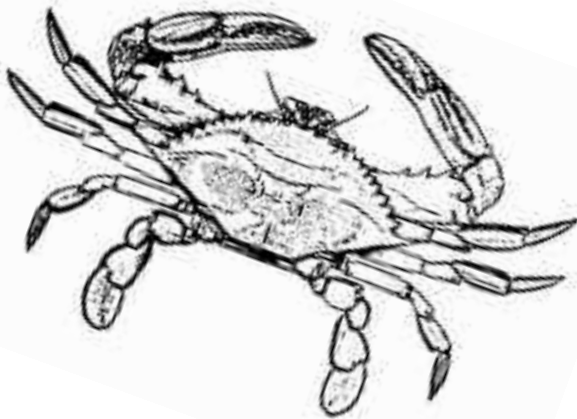
Male Crab, also called a “Jimmy”

- A male crab, a “Jimmy,” has a long, upside down “T” on its abdomen.
- Some watermen say that an easy way to recognize this is to imagine that the male crab has a picture of the **Washington Monument** on his belly.



Female Crab, also called a “She-Crab,” a “Sally,” or a “Sook”

- A female crab is identified as either mature or immature.
- An immature female crab, known as a “She-Crab” or a “Sally,” has an upside down “V” on her abdomen.
- A mature female crab, known as a “Sook,” has an upside down “U” on her abdomen.
- Some watermen say that an easy way to recognize this is to imagine that the female crab has a picture of the **U.S. Capitol Building** on her belly.

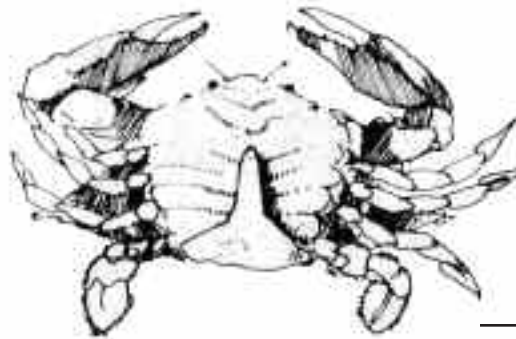
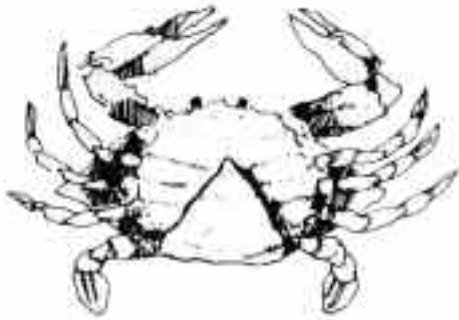


Name _____ Date _____

STUDENT WORKSHEET

Blue Crab Anatomy

Directions: Label whether the abdomen of the crabs pictured below are *male, immature female, or mature female.*



Extension Questions

1. Why is it important for watermen to know whether a crab is a female or male?
2. A waterman has to measure every crab he/she catches. If the crab is not of legal size, it must be put back into the Bay. Find out what the legal size for a crab is this year and draw the measurements on the back of this worksheet. (Note: The legal size may vary depending on the season it is caught, whether it has a hard or soft shell, etc. Visit www.dnr.state.md.us/fisheries/regulations.)
3. Why do you think the State of Maryland makes laws about the size of crabs that can be caught? (Hint: What might happen if watermen caught undersized crabs or female crabs?)