

Spider crab (*Maja brachydactyla*)

Malacostraca (Arthropoda:Decapoda)



The largest spider crab found in Irish waters it has an oval carapace, broader at the rear than the front and is covered in spines. Some variation in colour but typically orange to red this species is often encrusted with various pieces of red algae which can make it difficult to see identifying features. The diverging rostrum (spines on front of carapace) are diagnostic for this species. Much larger and more robust, even as juveniles, than the spindly spider crabs (*Inachus* or *Macropodia* spp.). The only confusions species in Irish water, *Hyas auraneus* (the sea toad), does not have conspicuous diverging rostrum as in *M. brachydactyla*.

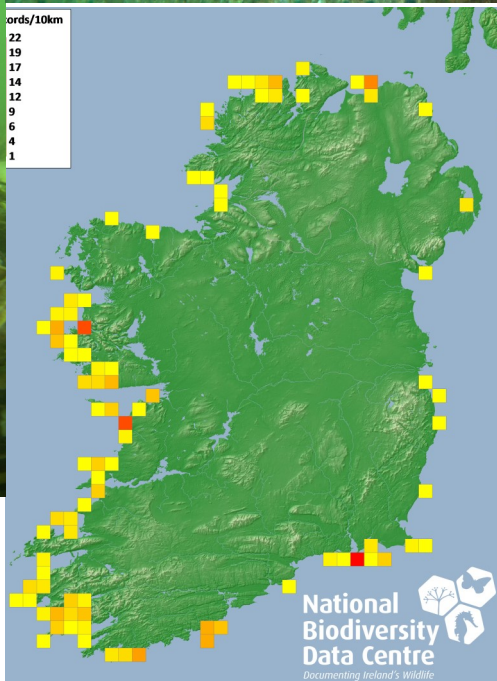
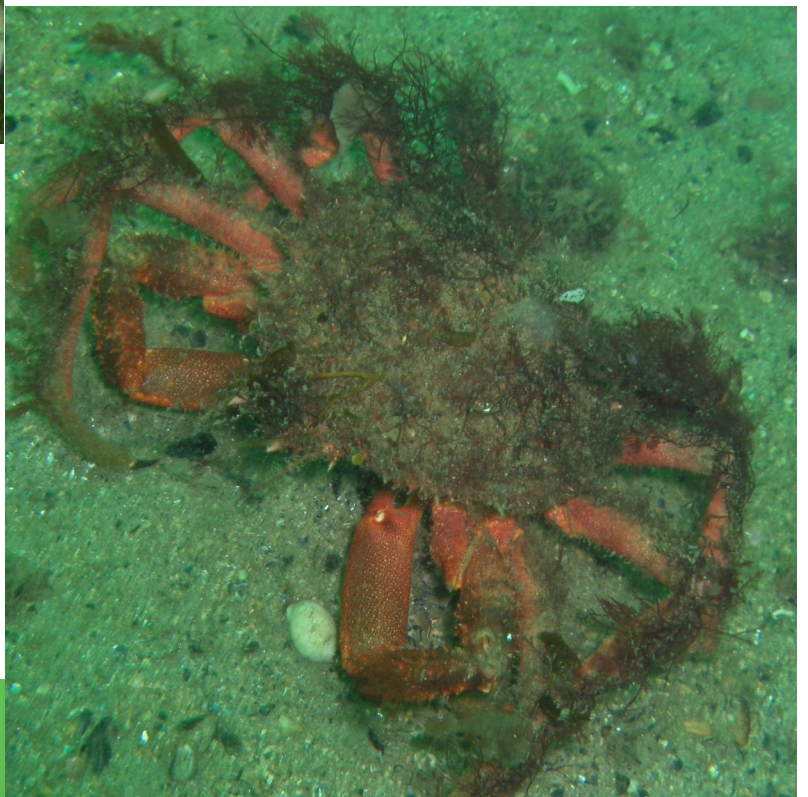


Found on all Irish coasts where suitable habitat is present. Typically male crabs inhabit deeper waters than the females this species is found at a variety of depths and in a variety of habitats but generally not at extremely sheltered sites.

Arthropoda->Crustacea->Malacostraca->Decapoda

IUCN Red List Categorisation: Not assessed

Previously classified as *Maja squinado*, genetic and morphological studies have shown that *M. squinado* is the more southerly of the two species with *M. brachydactyla* found in Irish coastal waters. A commercially fished species the major fishery for this species in Ireland is in Brandon and Tralee Bay. The adults of the species typically migrate to deeper water only returning to shallow waters to breed.



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