



DECORATOR CRAB

FAMILY: MAJIDAE

DID YOU KNOW?

There are over 7,000 types of crabs!!

WHERE AT AQWA?

You'll be lucky to find these crabs, but keep an eye out in our coral lagoon and coral reef exhibits.

If it looks like a piece of coral is moving or a sponge is off for a walk then it is probably a decorator crab!

SIZE: <13CM

DIET: ALGAE, SPONGES, SMALL CRUSTACEANS,

MAIN PREDATOR: FISH

HABITAT: SHALLOW WATER, SEAGRASS, CORAL REEFS

FOUND: WORLD WIDE

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Majidae is thought to come from 'Maja' - the Roman goddess of growth. Decorator crabs not only cover themselves in growth but they belong to a family of crabs famous for growing long spider-like legs; and their relative, the giant Japanese spider crab, is the largest crab in the world.

DECORATING STYLE - WHEN A HARD SHELL ISN'T ENOUGH

Decorator crabs use thin scissor-like claws to snip and place pieces of their habitat (sponges, algae and corals) all over their body. These living decorations stay in place thanks to hooked hairs which act like velcro.

This decorating habit is vital for survival, especially when they are young. It forms impressive camouflage, repels predators (if covered in stinging corals or distasteful sponges) and can double as food storage.

BREAKING OUT

A crab's shell doesn't grow, but the crab does. Rather than be stuck inside something that doesn't fit crabs moult, drawing their body out of the old shell then forming a new larger one.

RECYCLING

The decorator crab recycles its living decorations during the molting process. It removes the anemones, sponges and other decorations from its old shell and uses them to adorn its new shell.

OUR NATURAL CLEAN UP CREW

These are some of the hardest workers we have here at AQWA! They search for food around the clock and just happen to eat one of the most difficult algae to eradicate and control, bubble algae. What's even better is that they do so without the risk of spreading it further.