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## Blue Claw Crab

The scientific name of the blue crab aptly describes the species as the “beautiful savory swimmer.” It was derived from Latin and Greek. A literal translation might be the beautiful savory swimmer: *Callinectes sapidus*.

The blue crab is one of the most common marine invertebrates living in the Maurice River. The blue crab may be found in salt, fresh, and brackish waters. Epicures commonly refer to the males as Jimmies and the females as Belles.

This scavenger eats edible wastes, various marsh grasses and seaweeds. Crabs are also predators, feeding on clams, oyster and mussels.

The blue crab may grow up to eight inches lengthwise across its hard shell, or carapace. The shell ranges in color from olive, brown, or reddish, to varying shades of blue and is made of chitin, hardened with calcium. The compound eyes permit the crab to see even the smallest of movements in almost all directions. As a true crab it has five pairs of legs.

The blue crab supports a large recreational and extensive commercial fishery.

Recreational crabbing with single hand lines and collapsible traps does not require a license. The maximum harvest and/or possession limit of crabs is one bushel a day. Females harboring eggs are required to be released.

On the Jersey coast, blue crabs are as much a part of a summer vacation as sun bathing. Along the Maurice River recreational crabbing continues to provide families not only with fun outdoors, but often a tasty meal.