

GEORGIA AQUARIUM ANIMAL FACT SHEET

Giant Japanese spider crab

Macrocheira kaempferi

Range/Habitat

- The giant Japanese spider crab is found on the seabed in the Pacific Ocean around Japan.
- It occurs at depths of 150 to 1,000 feet (46 – 305 m).
- It prefers the vents and holes of the deeper parts of the ocean.

Physical Characteristics

- The giant Japanese spider crabs get its name from its likeness to a spider. It has a rounded body covered with stubby projections and long spindly legs.
- The species has been known to grow up to 12 feet (3.7 m) across when its legs are extended.
- Its body will grow to about 15 inches (37 cm) wide and the animal can weigh up to 41 lbs (18.6 kg).
- The male is larger than the female.

Diet/Feeding

- The giant Japanese spider crab is an omnivore, consuming both plant matter and animals.
- It sometimes acts as a scavenger, eating the flesh of dead animals.
- Some are known to scrape the bottom of the ocean floor for plants and algae, while others pry open the shells of mollusks.

Conservation Status

- The giant Japanese spider crab is not on the IUCN Red List.

Additional Information

- This crab is one of the largest known arthropods (i.e., the group of animals that includes crabs, shrimp, insects, such as spiders, and more).
- It is difficult for fishermen to catch the giant Japanese spider crab because of the depth at which it is found, so the species is not widely exploited commercially. However, it is considered a rare delicacy in Asia.
- This species belongs to the *Majidae* family, which is known “decorator crabs.” This group of crabs will pick up small anemones, pieces of sponge or other animals and cement them to the top of their carapace (shell). This provides the crab with natural camouflage that protects it from predators.
- The female carries the fertilized eggs attached to her abdominal appendages until they hatch into tiny planktonic larvae.
- The young crab, during the larval stage, looks nothing like its parents. It is small and transparent with a round, legless body and usually drifts as plankton at the surface of the ocean.

Source

www.animaldiversity.ummz.umich.edu