



*\*Photo Credit: Government of Bermedua.*

## Barbados Giant Land Crab (*Cardisoma guanhumi*)

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Also known as the Blue Land Crab, the Barbados Giant Land Crab is one of the largest species of “land crabs” in the world, sometimes reaching claw to claw span of as much as 8 to 12 inches or greater! Found in and near estuarine regions throughout the Caribbean, as well as along the Atlantic coast of North and South America, the Bahamas, and along the Gulf of Mexico, these crabs, as with other genera of land crabs, are terrestrial omnivorous or scavengers, feeding on a number of different vegetable, plant, or animal material they can locate or come across. They also occur along the Central American Gulf Coast to Costa Rica and Panama. These crabs can successfully colonize a wide variety of ecological environments, where they can become a nuisance species in some areas.

Coloration-wise, juvenile crabs may be a brown, tan, or dark orangish color with brighter orange to yellow-orange legs. Adult crabs range in carapace and upper leg color from a pale blue or bluish-gray, to violet blue with the tips and undersides of the claws and bodies being a paler white, cream, or yellowish color. Some individuals may be a white or ashy gray in color as well. Adult male Barbados land crabs may also develop one oversized claw during their breeding and reproduction which are used in combat and defending territories. Heavy spring rains as well as other weather patterns and lunar cycles often initiate the migration, breeding, and reproduction of these crabs, where like other land crabs, must still return to their brackish or saltwater environments in order to do so.

### Taxonomy

**Life:** All living, physical, and animate entities

**Domain:** Eukaryota

**Kingdom:** Animalia

**Phylum:** Arthropoda

**Subphylum:** Crustacea

**Class:** Malacostraca

**Order:** Decapoda

**Infraorder:** Brachyura

**Family:** Gecarcinidae

**Genus:** Cardisoma

**Species:** *Cardisoma guanhumi*\*

*\*Taxonomy subject to change and revision.*

### **Lifespan and Longevity**

In the wild, these crabs can live for up to at least 13 years, if not more. Unlike other land crabs, this species of land crab possesses a much slower growth and development rate. They are probably going to be wild collected, also.

### **Distribution and Habitat**

The Barbados Giant Land Crab ranges from along the Atlantic coast of the United States, from North Carolina to Florida, throughout Cuba, the Caribbean, and the Bahamas, Puerto Rico, and along the Gulf of Mexico from Louisiana and Alabama, Texas, Mexico, to Costa Rica and Panama, and also along the northern coast of South America to Colombia and Venezuela. These crabs also occur further south along the South Atlantic coast of South America, from Sao Luis to State of Santa Catarina.

These crabs can adapt to and colonize a wide variety of habitats and environments, but are noted to rarely occur more than 8 km from the shore, where they live along estuary and river banks. The most dense populations may occur in low lying muddy grounds, giving them the ample opportunity to create burrows as deep as 2 meters. Some populations can also occur in coastal sands above the tide lines. Terrestrial habitats such as tropical rainforests, or saltwater aquatic or freshwater rivers and streams [Online Guide to the Animals of Trinidad and Tobago]. They can also tolerate a wide range of salinities as well.

### **Experience Level Required**

Intermediate/Moderate to Advanced.

### **Size**

The Barbados Land Crab can reach upper carapace lengths from about 4 to 6 ½ inches, and can have a total maximum claw-span width of as much as 13 inches or greater. They can weigh as much as 500 grams or 18 ounces or more (or approximately 2 lbs.).

### **Housing and Enclosure**

***Enclosure System: Semi-Aquatic to Semi-Terrestrial.*** These crabs require a large secure, sturdy, and adequately ventilated terrarium, aquarium, or other enclosure at least 55 gallons in size or 48" x 13" x 21" in dimensions. These crabs are best housed individually to prevent them from fighting. Crabs that are not provided adequate space may fight and possibly kill one another for resources. A substrate that enables these moon crabs to dig and burrow, as well as maintain adequate humidity should also be provided. Sandy substrates as well as peat or sphagnum moss, shredded aspen, or mixtures thereof can be used for added security and stimuli including driftwood, artificial foliage, and plenty of hiding places for them in the form of log or slab hides, rocks, clay flower pots, or other commercially designed hides and cage decor.

### **Temperature, Lighting, and Humidity**

Adequate humidity is perhaps one of the most important factors for maintaining these crabs, which should be around 70 to 75%. Provide at least two large, shallow water dishes that the crabs can readily enter or exit. A temperature gradient should also be provided in the enclosure, with around 70 to 85 degrees F for ambient and water temperatures. Crabs that are exposed to direct sunlight or heat constantly may overheat. For any supplemental heating that may be

needed, use a low wattage incandescent or UVA/UVB bulb, radiant or ceramic heat emitter, or UTH (under tank heating element). More specific lighting, heating, and humidity product suggestions and recommendations that can best suit one's needs, as well as those of one's animals can be given as well.

### **Feeding, Diet, and Nutrition**

***Detritivorous to Omnivorous***; In the wild, these land crabs are omnivorous scavengers, feeding on small bits of organic plant and animal matter they are able to locate during foraging as well as carrion. In captivity, a varied, rotating diet for these crabs is recommended. They will eat a variety of fruit and vegetable matter, as well as different feeder crickets, mealworms, waxworms, superworms, redworms, earthworms, or shrimp. Some commercially available fish foods can also be eat, as well as sometimes small frozen-thawed rodents of appropriate size. An adequate calcium and vitamin D3 based diet and supplementation is also recommended for these crab's optimal exoskeleton growth and development. More specific dietary and supplementary product suggestions and recommendations that can best suit one's needs, as well as those of one's animals can be given as well.

### **Handling**

The best way to handle these large crabs, when necessary, is to grab and hold them by their claws using both one hand per claw.

**\*\*Also be sure to practice basic cleanliness and hygiene associated with proper husbandry after touching or handling any animals or animal enclosures to prevent the possibility of contracting salmonellosis or any other zoonotic pathogens\*\***

### **Contact**

Authored by Eric Roscoe. For any additional questions, comments, and/or concerns regarding this animal, group of animals, or this care sheet, please email and contact:

[Eric.S.Roscoe@gmail.com](mailto:Eric.S.Roscoe@gmail.com)

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