



**Photo Credit: Pets & Animals Blog.*

Moon and Halloween Crabs (*Gecarcinus quadratus*)

Living Halloween Ornaments

These colorful crabs are also known as the Halloween, or red land crabs. These terrestrial species of land crabs are quite colorful, displaying bluish purple claws, reddish orange limbs and joints, and a darker black to bluish black carapace with reddish, yellowish, or orange spots, dashes or streaks behind the eyes. These terrestrial crabs have evolved several unique adaptations for conserving water and living much of their lives on land and away from the water, including having a higher oxygen carrying capacity. They must still keep their external gills moist, however, and also must still return to the sea or tidal pools for breeding and reproduction. Most species are also omnivorous scavengers, feeding on dead and decaying plant and animal matter, or smaller animals they can capture and consume. These crabs are also strong burrowers as well, and will sometimes dig their burrows up to six feet or more underground.

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: *Gecarcinus*

Species: *Gecarcinus quadratus**

**Taxonomy subject to change and revision.*

Lifespan and Longevity

Moon and Halloween crabs may live up to 5 to 10 years or more in captivity.

Distribution and Habitat

The Halloween, or moon crabs are a genus and species of crabs indigenous to the Pacific western coast of the southwestern United States, Mexico, and throughout much of the western coast of

Central America to Panama. This species may also range further along the Pacific coast of northwestern South America, although within this range, its species is disputed. Within this coastal range, these colorful crabs can be found amongst the coastal mangrove swamps and stands, beaches and sand dunes, and surrounding tropical rainforests to dry tropical forests, where they forage and occupy amongst the leaf litter and other ground debris.

Experience Level Required

Novice/Beginner to Intermediate/Moderate.

Size

Moon and Halloween crabs are fairly large crabs that can reach up to 2 to 3 inches in size.

Housing and Enclosure

Enclosure System: Semi-Aquatic to Moist-Terrestrial. Moon/Halloween crabs should be housed in a secure, sturdy, adequately ventilated terrarium, aquarium, or other enclosure. These crabs may be kept communally, meaning they are often found in groups, and multiple crabs can be housed together provided an adequately sized enclosure is accordingly provided, although males may fight. A 10 to 20 gallon or similar sized enclosure or larger depending on the number of crabs maintained is suitable. 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. Sand substrates as well as peat or sphagnum moss or mixtures thereof can be used for added security and stimuli including driftwood, artificial foliage, and hides 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 moon 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, Halloween and moon crabs are omnivorous scavengers, feeding on small bits of organic plant and animal matter they are able to locate during foraging. In captivity, a varied, rotating diet for these crabs is recommended. A variety of fruit and vegetable matter will be eaten, as well as freeze dried plankton, krill, feeder crickets, mealworms, waxworms, superworms, redworms, earthworms, or shrimp. Some commercially available fish foods can also be given. 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

Moon crabs can be handled carefully, although they may pinch (which is not painful or dangerous). They can be allowed to walk on one's hands. Care should be taken to not drop them, however, since this can fracture their shell and/or cause internal injury to them.

****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

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Disclaimer: Note that the information provided in these, or any care sheets, are not intended to be all-exhaustive, and further research and care should always be sought and provided when it comes to any species one may prospectively be interested in. These care sheets are also not intended to serve as substitutes for professional veterinary medical care and husbandry should any animal require it. Always seek proper and professional veterinary care for any animal should the need arise, and be prepared ahead of time for any and all husbandry costs and expenses that may occur with any animal beyond the initial purchase. Any animal owned is ultimately a matter of personal/individual care and responsibility. We cannot make any claims or guarantees regarding any information in this care sheet therein. This care sheet may be reprinted or redistributed only in its entirety.

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