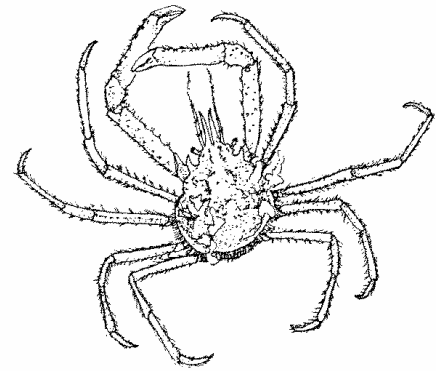


# Decorator Crab

"If you think you see part of the rock or bottom of a tide pool moving, it's probably a decorator crab. "



**Scientific name:** *Oregonia gracilis* The scientific name comes from the Greek word *orego* - meaning to stretch or reach, and the Latin word, *gracilis* - meaning slender, thin or simple.

**Other names:** Graceful decorator crab

**Phylum:** Arthropoda → *SubPhylum* Crustacea → *Class* Malacostraca → *Order* Decapoda → *Family* Majidae

**Size:** Carapace spans up to 1½ inches (3.9cm) wide.

**Habitat:** Usually among seaweed in intertidal zones, and in subtidal water up to 1,439 (436m) deep.

**Diet:** Although considered a carnivore, the graceful decorator crab is known to consume algae from time to time, making it more of an omnivore. An opportunistic scavenger, this crab eats small animals that it collects from crevices and the sea floor using its long pinchers.

**Range:** Bering Sea to Monterey Bay, California. Also found in Japan.

**Conservation Status:** Pollution, un-monitored collection, and careless steps of tide pool enthusiasts can put any intertidal animal at risk. So please watch and learn, but don't touch these beautiful animals when you see them at the beach!

## **Fun Facts:**

- ☆ All decorator crabs are known for their habit of adorning themselves with bits of seaweed, hydroids, sponges, bryozoans and other intertidal debris. These are attached to hook shaped hairs on the carapace using a glue-like substance secreted from the mouth.
- ☆ Decorating helps this crab in many ways. For example, the materials on its shell provide both shade from the sun, as well as camouflage from predators. In fact, these crabs will adorn themselves to match their environment, making them difficult to find both for predators and the curious observer!
- ☆ Sometimes animals used as decoration, such as sponges, will grow so large, that the decorator crab will be unable to support it without the buoyancy provided by the water.