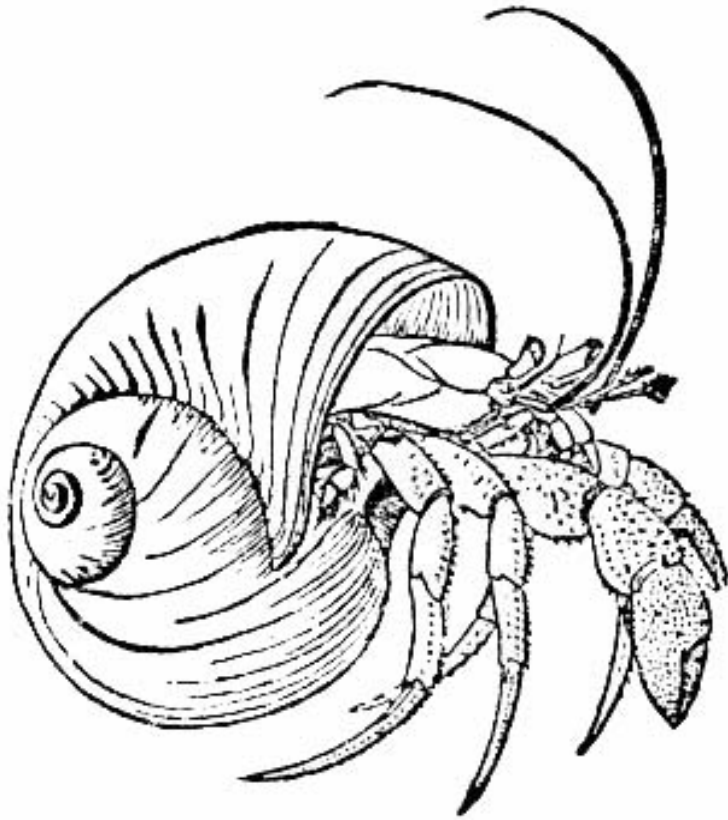


The hermit crab is not a true crab. It belongs to the shrimp family.

Some pet hermit crabs eat fruit, pretzels, and bacon.

Mother crabs can lay as many as 50,000 eggs!  
That is too many babies!



## HERMIT CRABS

### ROBBERS OF THE DEEP



By Pamela Coleman

A  
LearningIsland.org  
15 - Minute Book

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Hermit Crabs/Pamela Coleman

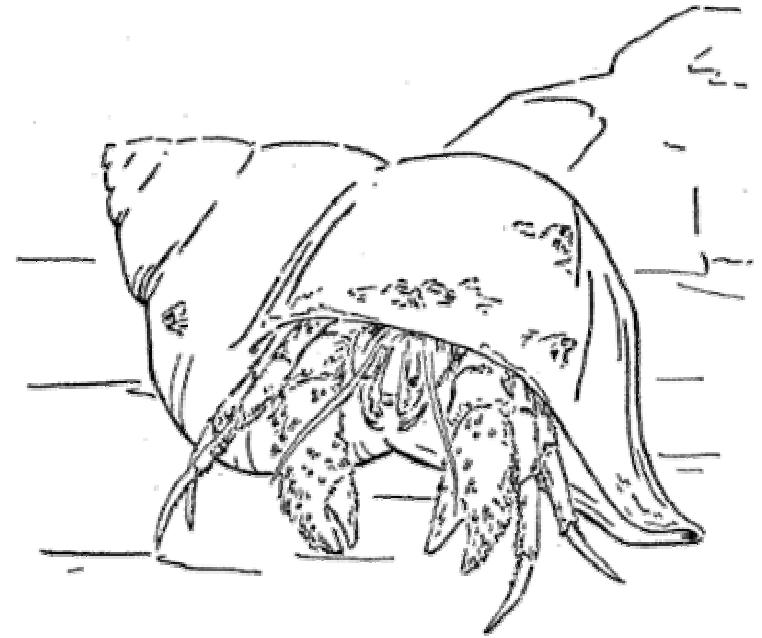
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## **FUNKY FACTS**

A male hermit crab will drag a female crab around by her giant claw until she is ready to leave her shell and mate.

Hermit crabs are also called robber crabs. That's because when they find a new shell that still has something living in inside, they will dig it out with their claws and move right in.

They like to live in warm places. Be sure to ask the pet store owner the best way to keep them warm.

You should pick them up and hold them by the shell. This is stronger than their legs.

Hermit crabs like to crawl. There should be some rocks and wood for them to climb on. They will also climb on you. They don't bite but they will pinch something (like fingers) to hold on to.

Be careful not to let it fall! This could kill your hermit crab. And never try to take it out of the shell.

Hermit crabs eat very little so they leave very little mess. You might see little dark drops in the sand that have fallen from the inside of the shell. This dries up very fast and does not smell. After a few months you can wash the sand and dry it or just change it.



## HERMIT CRABS

How would you like to carry your house around on your back everywhere you go? Well that is just what a hermit crab does.

Most crabs have a heavy shell to protect them. A hermit crab is not so lucky. He doesn't have a shell of his own. So the hermit crab must find a shell to protect itself. He will search and search until he finds a shell that is just the right size. Then he will move in.

Sometimes a hermit crab can't find a shell. Then he will use the next best thing such as a small can or a piece of tube.

When the hermit crab is in danger, it pulls itself as deep inside his shell as it can go. Then it sticks out its large claw and tries to fight.

Hermit crabs talk to each other by making a chirp or a croak. No one knows how they make that sound.



## CAN I HAVE A PET?

Many people like to keep land hermit crabs for pets. They are fun to watch and easy to take care of.

All you need to keep a crab is an old fish tank, some sand, extra shells in different sizes, plenty of water and food dishes. Make sure the dishes are small enough for the crab to climb out of. You don't want him to drown!

Now you are all ready for your crabs! You can buy them and their food at the pet store.

Land hermit crabs like to live in groups. So, if you want one for a pet you should buy him some friends.

When this happens they sink to the ocean floor and hide in the sand until they finish growing into a baby crab.

A baby hermit crab stays hidden until it looks like a hermit crab.

Soon it will be big enough to find its own shell. When they find the shell that is the right size for them, they will twist their body to fit inside their new home.

Baby hermit crabs grow very fast so they will change shells many times.



## WHAT DO THEY LOOK LIKE?

Hermit crabs are not really crabs. They are more like shrimp.

Hermit crabs do not have bones inside their body. That makes them very soft. So they use a hard seashell to protect themselves.

They have 10 legs, five on each side!

The front two legs are claws called pincers. One front claw is smaller than the other.

The back legs are very small. They use their two back legs and their stomach muscles to help hold themselves inside the shell. If they come out of the shell they might get eaten.

Since there is not much room inside the shell, hermit crabs can only bring one claw inside when they hide. That is why one claw is smaller than the other.

Hermit crabs have antennas on top of their head. They use them to help stay away from danger or to feel for food.



## **BABIES**

Hermit crabs hatch from eggs. The mother carries the eggs around in the shell with her until they are ready to hatch.

All hermit crabs lay their eggs in water. Even land hermit crabs will return to the water when it is time to lay their eggs.

Once the eggs hatch they float away to begin life with the plankton. Plankton are very tiny plants and animals that float in the ocean.

During this time they will grow. Soon they will grow into a larva. That means they look like a little worm. It has a long thin body, two big eyes, and a pointed nose.



## WHAT DO THEY EAT?

A hermit crab is an omnivore. That means that it eats just about anything. That includes plants and dead animals.

They use their big right claw to dig around in the sand looking for food.

Land hermit crabs will dig around in the ground looking for food. Many times they will bury food to eat later. Or they will take it back to their hiding place for a treat.

Hermit Crabs also eat their skin when they shed. This gives them the calcium they need to help them grow.

Land hermit crabs live on land. But they also have special lungs that act like gills. Gills take oxygen from the water. This helps the hermit crab breathe under water for a long time.

These gills also hold water. That way a hermit crab can go almost a year without any food or anything to drink.

Hermit crabs come in many colors. Many are red, brown, orange, purple and yellow. Some are even bright blue. And some even have stripes, dots or even hair on their body. The stripes can be brown or orange or red or yellow.

There are about 500 different kinds of hermit crabs. And a hermit crab can live as long as 30 years in the wild.





Hairy hermit crabs are green with white bands around their legs. They are very small. Hairy hermits look like they are covered with hair.

Electric blue hermit crabs are hard to find. They are a very bright blue with black bands around their legs. Their antennae are bright orange. Both of their front claws are almost the same size and are light brown in color.

## WHERE DO THEY LIVE?

There are three main kinds of hermit crabs: land hermits, marine hermits and deep sea hermits.

Marine hermit crabs live in the bottom of tide pools. These are puddles of water left around rocks when the tide comes in and out.

Deep sea hermit crabs live in the deepest part of the ocean.

Another type of hermit crab is called the land hermit crab. These hermit crabs live on land in many places including trees.

Some land hermit crabs have been found living over a mile away from the shore. But they try to





## DIFFERENT SPECIES OF HERMIT CRABS

There are many different species of hermit crabs. Some of them are very interesting.

Black eyed hermit crabs grow very big. They can grow to be almost two inches long. Like their name says, they have large black eyes.

Their claws are covered with thorns, but the thorns are not sharp. Their legs and claws are orange and white with red bands.

stay close to the water. That's because they return to the water to have their babies.

You might pick up a shell and think it is empty. But be careful! Hermit Crabs are nocturnal. That means they wake up at night. During the day they like to bury themselves in the sand and sleep.

Hermit crabs need lots of water to live. Land hermit crabs get their water from dew. Both land and marine hermit crabs can store water in special lungs.

Hermit crabs can not stay in the hot sun for too long. If they get too much sunlight they will dry out and die.





## **DO YOU NEED A RIDE?**

Hermit crabs like to share their homes with other sea animals. These animals stick to the outside of their shell. This hides the Hermit Crab and keeps it safe.

The sea animals get to move around on the hermit crab's back and eat any food that is left by the crab. When a hermit crab moves to a new home, he takes these animals with him.

## **BREAK A LEG**

Hermit Crabs shed their skin just like a snake. This is called molting. Younger hermit crabs molt more often than older crabs. That's because they are growing a lot faster.

When they shed their skin, they might break a leg off. That's OK because they can just grow a new one.

After it molts a hermit crab buries itself in sand to protect itself until its new skin grows hard.

