

What is a Stone Crab?

The biggest crab that you might find at a Florida beach is the stone crab. If you were a stone crab, you would have 10 pairs of legs in all! You would use eight of them for swimming and walking and two of them for catching food and pinching other animals (including people!) that might want to eat you. Your eyes would be on stalks similar to a little submarine's periscope. Stone crabs are very secretive creatures and usually hide under structures in the water such as oyster bars.

The younger stone crabs are small enough to pick up, but don't try to pick up the adults. They have very strong claws they use for crushing clamshells and eating the clams inside; they may even crush your



fingers. Stone crabs are a favorite at South Florida restaurants. Many species have a high and nutritious meat yield from their body and legs. Such properties have made them a favorite food for man and a target of heavy exploitation. As a result, stone crab harvesting must be managed to ensure that there will be plenty of them to enjoy in the future.

