

# Crab nebula of life

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Crabs—those sometimes pesky, hard-shelled beachcombers—are a highly diverse animal, with some 7,000 species found in oceans, lakes and on land, varying in size from the diminutive pea crab (millimeters) to the giant 4 meter-wide Japanese spider crab.

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The research team's estimates confirm the fossil record of most living crab families and superfamilies first arising during the late Cretaceous and early Tertiary (60-100 mya), at the same time when dinosaurs ruled the Earth. They also demonstrated that freshwater crabs were derived early in the evolution of true crabs and are shown to have at least two independent origins. Molecular methods estimate that freshwater [crabs](#) separated from their closest marine relatives after the break-up of Pangaea (~200 mya).

The study refines many crab evolutionary issues, and provides a new, comprehensive resource for scientists to further investigate the

molecular underpinnings responsible for body forms shapes and functions among the various [species](#).

Provided by Oxford University Press

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