

In Cuba, crabs embark on perilous migration to Bay of Pigs

April 12 2022, by Andrea Rodriguez



Crabs cross a road in Giron, Cuba, Sunday, April 10, 2022. Millions of crabs emerge at the beginning of the spring rains and start a journey to the waters of the Bay of Pigs to spawn in a yearly migration. Credit: AP Photo/Ramon Espinosa

Every year in Cuba, millions of crabs emerge from the forest at the

beginning of the spring rains and head for the waters of the Bay of Pigs, crossing streets and highways on a perilous journey to mate and reproduce.

Now underway, the migration causes concern to drivers who try to swerve in an often futile attempt not to kill the crustaceans. The [crabs](#) are a nuisance to [residents](#) but the sight of their road-crossing is a wonder for tourists and other first-time onlookers.

"They got here before us," said Amaury Urra, a 50-year-old hiking guide who spent his entire life in this part of the Ciénega de Zapata, the largest wetland in the Caribbean, particularly picturesque for the backdrop of turquoise sea waters and the coastal cliffs. "We're used to this."

"Where I live, which is in the center of the town of Girón, the crabs don't get there as much," though there are plenty on the outskirts, he said.

Located about 180 kilometers (110 miles) southeast of Havana, the area was the scene of a 1961 failed invasion by Cuban exiles who signed up for a covertly CIA-funded operation to overthrow Fidel Castro.

This year, the crabs started their journey early. At the end of March, the municipal authorities issued a warning to drivers to avoid traveling in the morning and evening hours—the favorite crossing times for the crabs. Environmentalists usually demand the closure of the main road, especially at key migration times.



Thousands of crabs cross a road after spawning in the sea in Giron, Cuba, Saturday, April 9, 2022. The yearly crab spawning migration causes concern to drivers that try to swerve in a futile attempt not to kill the crustaceans and are a nuisance to residents but the sight of their travels across the road is a wonder for tourists and anyone interested in the phenomenon. Credit: AP Photo/Ramon Espinosa



A couple drives a vintage American car down a road full of fleeing crabs in Giron, Cuba, Saturday, April 9, 2022. Millions of crabs emerge at the beginning of the spring rains and start a journey to the waters of the Bay of Pigs in a yearly spawning migration. Credit: AP Photo/Ramon Espinosa



A crab walks on a rock after spawning in the sea while a fisherman rests in Giron, Cuba, Sunday, April 10, 2022. Millions of crabs emerge at the beginning of the spring rains and start a journey to the waters of the Bay of Pigs in a yearly spawning migration. Credit: AP Photo/Ramon Espinosa



A crab walks on a rock after spawning in the sea in Giron, Cuba, Sunday, April 10, 2022. Millions of crabs emerge at the beginning of the spring rains and start a journey to the waters of the Bay of Pigs in a yearly spawning migration. Credit: AP Photo/Ramon Espinosa



Crabs cross a wall after spawning in the sea in Giron, Cuba, Saturday, April 9, 2022. Millions of crabs emerge at the beginning of the spring rains and start a journey to the waters of the Bay of Pigs in a yearly spawning migration. Credit: AP Photo/Ramon Espinosa



A vintage American car drives down a road as a crab tries cross the road in Giron, Cuba, Saturday, April 9, 2022. The yearly spawning migration causes concern to drivers that try to swerve in a futile attempt not to kill the crustaceans and are a nuisance to residents but the sight of their travels across the road is a wonder for tourists and anyone interested in the phenomenon. Credit: AP Photo/Ramon Espinosa



A truck drives on a road full of crabs after they tried to cross a road after spawning in the sea in Giron, Cuba, Sunday, April 10, 2022. The yearly crab migration causes concern to drivers that try to swerve in a futile attempt not to kill the crustaceans and are a nuisance to residents but the sight of their travels across the road is a wonder for tourists and anyone interested in the spawning phenomenon. Credit: AP Photo/Ramon Espinosa



Documentary filmmakers try to sweep the road so as not to crush crabs that are crossing a road after spawning in the sea as well as the remains of other crabs that have been run over by vehicles in Giron, Cuba, Saturday, April 9, 2022. Millions of crabs emerge at the beginning of the spring rains and start a journey to the waters of the Bay of Pigs to spawn in a yearly migration. Credit: AP Photo/Ramon Espinosa



A carrion bird flies over the remains of crushed crabs as they cross a road after spawning in the sea in Giron, Cuba, Saturday, April 9, 2022. Millions of crabs emerge at the beginning of the spring rains and start a journey to the waters of the Bay of Pigs to spawn in a yearly migration. Credit: AP Photo/Ramon Espinosa



Crabs cross a road after spawning in the sea along with the remains of other crabs that were run over by vehicles in Giron, Cuba, Saturday, April 9, 2022. Millions of crabs emerge at the beginning of the spring rains and start a journey to the waters of the Bay of Pigs in a yearly migration. Credit: AP Photo/Ramon Espinosa

The passage of the red crustaceans—the species is called *gecarcinus ruricola*—could last until July. The largest amount of traffic occurs between April and May. Residents have to be careful: When the crabs feel threatened, they can puncture [car tires](#) with their pincers.

Official figures estimate that some 3.5 million crabs die each season on the road, many crushed by passing vehicles. They take a minute and a half to cross.

This type of crab lives and migrates in the Bahamas, Nicaragua, Jamaica and Dominica. But only here, and perhaps in another sector of the coast towards the neighboring province of Cienfuegos, does its path collide so dramatically with human traffic.

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