



Mature Female with egg sponge:

- They move into saltier water to hatch out their eggs
- While they mate once, they can have multiple sponges with an average of 2 million eggs per sponge.
- Eggs take about two weeks to develop starting off bright orange and darkening to almost black right before hatching.



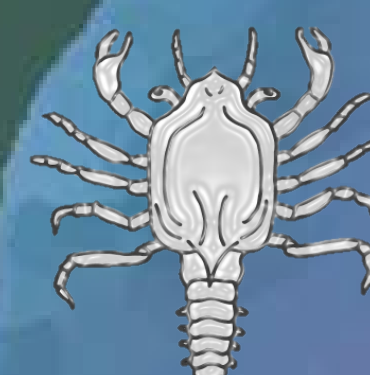
Zoea:

- 7-8 stages
- Carried by currents
- Require some salinity for growth (Prefer 23- 33 ppt.)
- Warmer waters are preferred.
- Eat other zooplankton



Megalopae:

- Has claws and can swim and crawl
- Move back into the estuary looking for a place to settle



Juveniles:

- First stage of crab to look like a crab
- Seek shelter among aquatic vegetation to develop
- Move further inshore



Blue Crab Life Cycle

Adults:

- In Louisiana, crabs reach adult size in 12-18 months.
- Increase about 25% in size with each molt
- Opportunistic feeding on oysters, small fish, crabs, snails, shrimp, and plants

Keys to Growth

- Temperature
- Salinity
- Food availability