

Horn-eyed ghost crab

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Why in News?

Visakhapatnam researchers recently documented the first confirmed instance of a horn-eyed ghost crab preying on a Mottled Lightfoot crab along the Rushi Konda shoreline suggests a temporary merging of habitats where sand and stone occur in close succession.

Mottled Lightfoot crab is a species that occupies rocky crevices and does not ordinarily cross paths with its sand-dwelling counterpart.

- **Scientific Name** - Ocypode ceratophthalmus.
- **Genus** - Ocypode.
- It is a **fast-running, sand-colored crab** commonly found on tropical and subtropical beaches of the Indian Ocean and western Pacific — including India's coastline.
- **Key identification features**
 - **"Horns" on eyes** - Each eye has a pointed extension (a style) on top — the crab's trademark.
 - **Color**- Pale sandy to grey; blends well with beach sand (excellent camouflage).
 - **Size** - Carapace up to ~5-6 cm wide.
 - **Build** - Long legs; built for speed on open sand.



- **Habitat** - It is generally restricted to sandy zones, above the high-tide line.
- Digs deep, slanting burrows for shelter and moisture.
- **Behavior** - Their pale bodies blend easily with sand, a feature that, along with their swift movement at dusk and dawn, has given rise to their common name.
- Mostly nocturnal; active at dusk and night.
- Breathes using modified gills and can stay out of water for long periods.
- **Diet** - They have been recorded hunting clams, snails, worms, isopods, shrimps and a variety of insects.
- In some regions, they feed on the eggs and hatchlings of birds and turtles. They also prey on other crabs, including smaller hermit crabs.
- **Ecological importance** - Cleans beaches by scavenging dead matter.
- **Indicator species** - Healthy ghost-crab populations often reflect low beach disturbance.
- Aerates sand through burrowing, aiding nutrient cycling.

*Six species of ghost crabs have been reported along the Indian coastline, and at least 3 of these have been observed at Rushikonda Beach, including *O. brevicornis*, *O. macrocera* and *O. cordimanus*.*

Reference

[The Hindu | Horn-eyed ghost crab](#)



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