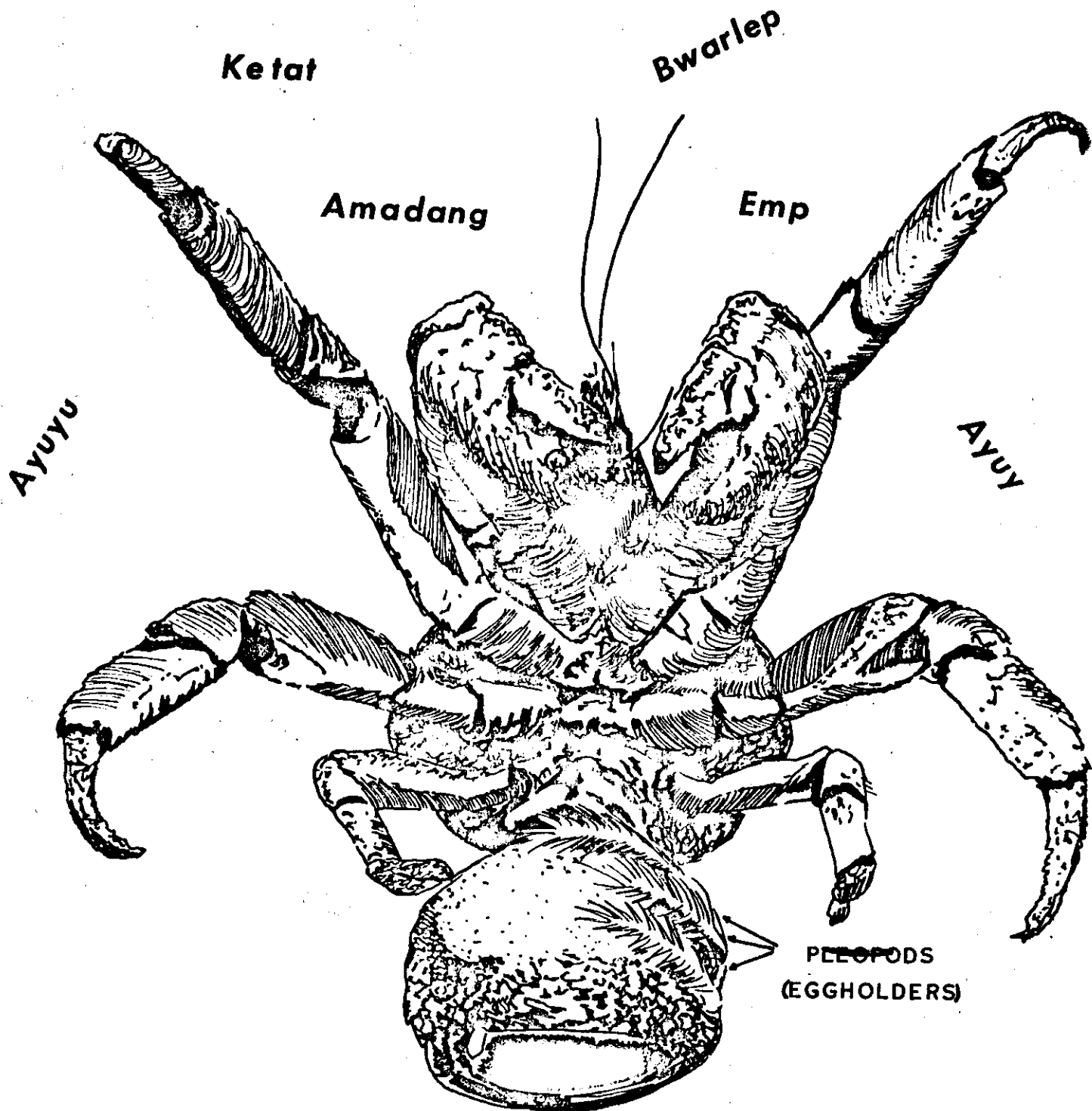


MEET BIRGUS LATRO



Mrs. Coconut Crab

Division of Fisheries
Department of Agriculture, Forests and Fisheries

MEET BIRGUS LATRO

The Coconut Crab has different names on different Islands and in different languages: ayuyu, ketat, bwarlep, ayuy, amadang, emp. The scientists everywhere in the world call it Birgus Latro. Whether people agree on the name or not they all agree it is very good to eat. There are many kinds of other crabs in the world but there is only one kind of coconut crab. It lives in the tropical areas of the Pacific Ocean and is used mainly by the people living in that area.

Many countries in the world have conservation laws which protect the kind of crabs that live there. Because of these laws they have many more crabs than they would without conservation. When the law says that crabs can be caught many people catch crabs and sell them. There are factories where crabs are canned for sale in stores. Some are frozen for sale. Fresh crabs are sold in stores. Many restaurants regularly serve crab to their customers. By obeying the conservation laws people in these countries have plenty of crab to eat and also make money by selling many of the crabs they catch.

If we obeyed a few simple rules about taking coconut crabs here, we could have many more crabs to eat and to sell in the markets and in the restaurants and cafes. Many people could earn money by catching and selling crabs.

How do we know that by following conservation rules we could have more coconut crabs? First we know there are more crabs on islands where very few people ever go.

We know that if you kill the females before they are large enough to lay eggs, not only are they small for eating but they never will reproduce more coconut crabs. |

We also know that if you kill a female coconut crab that is carrying eggs, the eggs will never hatch and grow up into adult coconut crabs.

What really happens on the islands where there are less people is that the females are given a chance to grow up and lay eggs. Also both the male and female crabs have a chance to grow up into large crabs. If you eat a crab when it weights one pound it never will be able to grow up to be 3 pound crab.

In some places there are bigger, old male crabs than are needed for breeding. One of these very large old crabs will chase smaller crabs away from food which they need in order to grow up. Because of this it is a good thing to take very large male crabs for eating.

THINGS WE CAN DO TO HAVE MORE COCONUT CRABS:-

1. Do not take any crabs smaller than 3 inches wide across the back.
2. Do not take any female crab that la carrying eggs - any time.
3. Do not set wild fires - fires kill many crabs.
4. Do not take any crabs between December 15 and March 15 except male crabs 5 ½ inches or more wide cross the back may be taken any time.

If we started following these conservation rules now and If everyone on the island was very honest and careful in following the* we would have many more crabs within five to eight years.

THERE ARE MANY INTERESTING THINGS WE KNOW ABOUT COCONUT
CRABS:

1. The female has three or more branched "arms" or pleopods fastened to the left side of her abdomen or belly. These are for egg carrying.
2. The female has a small hole or genital pore in the base of each of her third set of legs. These are for egg laying.
3. After she lays the eggs the female carries the eggs on the pleopods for several days or a month before they are ready to hatch.
4. The female carries the fertilized eggs down to the shore and alts on a wave washed rock. The eggs wash off into the sea water.