

Gillespie Creek Journal

Life begins in a sheltered area with a female Blue Crab cradled by a male waiting for her to molt late summer. With softened shell they mate.

She stores the sperm until conditions are right for survival her offspring. She then migrates to the mouth of the Bay to release the fertilized egg mass.



Chesapeake Bay Crab Fishing Boat 9/24/22

Chesapeake Bay Watermen's crabbing season lasts from April to November. Nearly a lost art. My son and I visit Ray's Crab Shack occasionally when I'm visiting his family living in suburban Annapolis, Maryland. **Oh how I love Maryland Crab Cakes and their companion dish, Maryland Crab soup!** The life of a Waterman now has become a rarity; only a reality for the most hearty and financially endowed it seems. To quote an article from the story written by Steve Adams in June of 2021 titled "The Last Waterman... There's not much you can control when you make your living from the water. And you can only catch so much due to time and regulations, so a bad year for crabs or oysters or fish or anything else means a bad year's pay."

Crab

by Sharon Olds

When I eat Crab, slide the rosy
 Rubbery claw across my tongue
 I think of my mother. She'd drive down
 To the edge of the bay, tiny woman in
 Huge car, she'd ask the crab-man to
 Crack it for her. She'd stand and wait as the
 Pliers broke those chalky homes, wild-
 Red and knobby, those cartilage wrists, the
 Thin orange roof of the back.
 I'd come home, and find her at the table
 Crisply unhousing the parts, laying the
 Fierce shell on one side, the
 Sold body on the other. She gave us
 Lots, because we loved it so much,
 So there was always enough, a mound of crab like a
 Cross between breast-milk and meat. The back
 Even had the shape of a perfect
 Ruined breast, upright flakes
 White as the flesh of a chrysanthemum, but the
 Best part was the claw, she'd slide it
 Out so slowly the tip was unbroken,
 Scarlet bulb of the feeler-it was such a
 kick to easily eat that weapon,
 Wreck its delicate hooked pulp between
 Palate and tongue. She loved to feed us
 And all she gave us was fresh, she was willing to
 Grasp shell, membrane, stem, to go
 Close to dirt and salt to feed us,
 The way she had gone near our father himself
 To give us life. I look back and
 See us dripping at the table. feeding. her

Row of pink eaters, the platter of flawless
 Limp claws, I look back further and
 see her in the kitchen shelling flesh, her
 Small hands curled-she is like a
 Fish-hawk, wild, tearing the meat
 Deftly, living out her life of fear and desire.



Chesapeake Bay Fish Hawk (Osprey) 9/24/22

The Blue Crab egg mass is then swept out to sea (perhaps by a hurricane) or Bay currents. It takes 31-49 days for the the next larval stage. Larvae feed along the bottom on tiny fish, working their way back into the Bay. It takes about 18 months to bring the cycle of Blue Crabs full circle. **Osprey, Fish Hawks, remain constant predators.**