



doi 10.5281/zenodo.7936795

Vol. 06 Issue 05 May - 2023

Manuscript ID: #0827

FECUNDITY OF THE INVASIVE HEPU MITTEN CRAB, *ERIOCHEIRHEPUENSIS* DAI, 1991 (GRAPSOIDEA: BRACHYURA) FROM SHATT AL- ARAB AND ARABIAN GULF. IRAQ

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ABSTRACT

The present study was carried out to investigate the fecundity of species of Branchyuran crustaceans *Eriocheirhepuensis*. Specimens were collected from different regions of Shatt-Al-Arab river, North-West Arabian Gulf and Khour Abdulla during the period from Autumn 2016 to Summer 2017 by fishing trawl net. The total wet weight of specimens ranged between (92.27-199.27) gm. The crab's carapace lengths were between (4.2 - 9.4) cm. Absolute fecundity was found to be from (252331.4 - 1636153.4) eggs/female. The relative fecundity ranged between (2181 - 13440.1) eggs/gm. The correlation values at the probability level of 0.05 between absolute fertility rate with carapace width and total weight were $r=0.93$, $r=0.96$ respectively.

Eggs development stages in *E.hepuensis* crabs are divided into seven stages. The objective of this study was to measure the fecundity for assessing population reproductive dynamics and energetics and for estimating the annual reproductive output and how it is linked to recruitment and population growth.

KEYWORDS:

Eriocheirhepuensis, Fecundity, Hairy crabs, Hepu mitten crab, Invasive crabs.

