

# Harbor Island, Naturally

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A PERSONAL PROJECT OF JOHN ALBERT



## GHOST CRABS

### SPEEDY CRABS

Everyone who visits a swimming beach in the Southeast is familiar with Ghost Crabs (*Ocyropsis quadrata*).



We first encountered them at Hatteras where they are most active at night. In the Low Country they are quite active during the daylight hours.

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Ghost crabs are scavengers that will eat any food they find. They are quite fond of small animals, including sea turtle hatchlings, clams, and other crabs.

These crabs breathe using their gills, which must be kept moist. They rarely enter the water.

Their shells are light tan to blend in with the sand. Six strong legs are capable of carrying Ghost crabs along at speeds up to 10 mph,

Ghost crabs make golf ball sized entrance holes in the dry sand. These tunnels can go deeper than three to four feet, and extend to the water table below. These burrows open into a chamber which the crabs design for a space that lets them



turn around. Ghost crabs will hibernate in their burrows during the winter, “holding their breath” for up to six weeks by storing oxygen in special sacs



Sources  
Seashore Animals of the Southeast  
Edward Rupert & Richard Fox

Audubon Field Guide to N. American  
Seashore Creatures