

BENTHIC DISTRIBUTION

Enough evidence has now been collected to enable some generalisation to be drawn concerning the benthic distribution of New Zealand crabs. In analysing benthic distribution the fauna has been divided into the following groups:

1. Species confined to the intertidal zone.
2. Species confined to the upper shelf (0–50 fathoms).
3. Species with wider distribution on the shelf (0–100 fathoms).
4. Species confined to depths greater than 100 fathoms.
5. Species found on the shelf but extending deeper than 100 fathoms.

1. INTERTIDAL

Fifteen species are now known to be confined to the intertidal zone. A few species included in the following list have also occasionally been recorded from depths less than 10 fathoms, but the species listed are essentially the littoral crabs of New Zealand. Many other species have been found in the intertidal zone but these have a wider distribution on the shelf. Where species are known below low tide mark, the range in fathoms is given in parentheses.

Naxia huttoni
Scylla serrata (0–2)
Portunus pelagicus
Heterozius rotundifrons
Pilumnus lumpinus
Pilumnopeus serratifrons
Ozius truncatus
Cyclograpsus lavauxi
Cyclograpsus insularum
Leptograpsus variegatus
Hemigrapsus crenulatus
Hemigrapsus edwardsi
Helice crassa (0–9)
Plagusia chabrus (0–2)
Hemiplax hirtipes

Of these 15 species, eight are predominantly northern in distribution, extending to varying degrees to the south but not reaching much farther south than Banks Peninsula. The other seven are distributed throughout most of the main islands. Considering the overseas relationships of the group, by far the highest percentage (47 percent) is endemic, 20 percent also occur in the Malayo-Pacific region and 13 percent are found elsewhere only in Australia. Thirteen percent are considered to be Austral in derivation and one species is known elsewhere only from Lord Howe, Norfolk and the Kermadecs.

2. SPECIES CONFINED TO THE UPPER SHELF (0–50 FATHOMS)

Fourteen species are found only on the upper levels of the continental shelf, many of them extending into the intertidal zone. In the list which follows known benthic distribution in fathoms is shown in parentheses:

Merocryptus lambriformis (35–40)
Petalomera wilsoni (0–50)
Eurynolambrus australis (0–50)
Notomithrax peronii (0–30)
Notomithrax minor (0–50)
Notomithrax ursus (0–40)