



Australian Government  
Director of National Parks

# Christmas Island National Park

## Red crab migration

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- Issued Monday 14 November, 2011.
- The rain that arrived last week has been sufficient to convince the island's red crabs that the wet season has started and so they have begun their annual breeding migration.
- Christmas Island is renowned world-wide for the annual breeding migration of its Red crabs. Every year after wet season rains have established, tens of millions of red crabs begin to move from their burrows to the sea to mate and spawn (dropping of their eggs into the sea). Once the crabs have left their burrow to migrate they are dependant on wet and humid weather to maintain body moisture.
- Migrating crabs are forced to cross open areas and roads on their way to the coast and some have to negotiate up to three or four such hazards on their migration to and from the sea each year. Many are killed by vehicles when they are forced to cross roads. Vehicles are a serious threat to the crabs. Surveys have shown that around 425,000 red crabs are killed by traffic during each year's migration.
- Sections of roads where crabs cross in high numbers have been identified and conservation measures have been implemented to help reduce this high death toll. Some roads are closed and traffic detoured around areas. Crab crossings and fences have been installed on other roads and in some places Parks staff will escort vehicles through high crab densities. Road closures are shown on the large red and white signs around town.
- You can help protect migrating red crabs. Drive slowly and carefully in areas where you encounter high crab numbers. If there are high numbers of crabs on the road, slow down to walking speed and be prepared to take your time to pass through them. If you have a passenger, ask them to walk in front of the car and brush crabs out of the way until you are through the heavy sections. A broom or grass rake is ideal for moving crabs from in front of the vehicle.
- The crabs have missed the opportunity to spawn around 20 November and will now be aiming to meet the possible 20 December spawning date. They have lots of time and will move slowly while rain continues. If the rain stops so will the crabs.
- Contact Christmas Island National Park HQ for further details on the migration and on road closures. Further bulletins will be issued as the migration progresses.

