



# The colours of



# FIDDLER CRAB

By TADPOLE



**"WOW! LOOKS DELICIOUS!!!"** is the common reaction when people see my fiddler crab photos. Well, most fiddler crabs are smaller than a thumb and can only grow up to 1.5 inches. Not only that they are too small to be an impressive candidate for seafood, but, from what I heard, they do not taste good at all, despite their colourful shell that looks like tasty candy.

People call them fiddler crab (genus: *Uca*) because of the fiddle-shaped large claw present on the males, like it is carrying a fiddle and a bow (while the females have two equal-sized small ones).

During low tide, you can see hundreds of them busy feeding themselves on the mud flat. I was so amazed by these funny little residents of mangrove forest when I first saw them at Kota Kinabalu Wetland Centre (formerly known as KK City Bird Sanctuary). You can find fiddler crabs in tan, blue-green, turquoise, black, yellow, white, orange and other colours. In fact, they are so cute that one can even keep them as pet.

Most fiddler crabs are semi-terrestrial, meaning that they are poor swimmers and do not enjoy to be underwater all the time. An ideal aquarium for fishes would be really bad for them.

The big claw of a male fiddler crab is so heavy that it takes up to 2/5 of its body weight, but this enormous claw is not used to hunt or crush food. Instead, it is used to seduce females as well as fend off male rivals. In combat, the male crabs do not pinch each other; they use the claw as a club, and strike each other with them. This rarely results in injury and almost never in death.

To attract female, the fiddler crab will show-off its super big claw by waving it up and down, as if saying "come here!" to the female. Probably size does matter; the female would be interested and follow the male fiddler crab into the burrow for mating.

However, the big claw is too weak to fight off their predators and too big for feeding. Only the small claws, with their

