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The green-eyed fiddler crab Uca chlorophthalmus is a spectacular member of the mangrove fauna on the east coast of Africa. Males possess one enormously enlarged 'nipper', used in contests among themselves, or waved in ritual displays to attract females. Darwin was the first to recognise that bizarre features like this arise due to sexual selection, because they give individuals an advantage in securing mates. Four species of Uca occur in South Africa, distinguishable by the different colours of their nippers. A patient stock-still wait at the edge of the mangroves at Durban or Beachwood will be rewarded by spectacular fiddler crab displays as they shyly emerge from the mud and commence courtship.

Photo and text: George Branch Email: mbranch@mweb.co.za



Alert readers with an interest in geography will have noticed an unfortunate error in the cover caption on page 3 of the January edition of SAMJ: while the Indian and Pacific oceans must presumably meet somewhere, it is certainly not at Cape Point. 'Pacific' should read 'Atlantic'.

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