



Look Out for Invasive Crab!

The green crab is invading from the west coast and has recently reached Alaska.

What is a green crab?

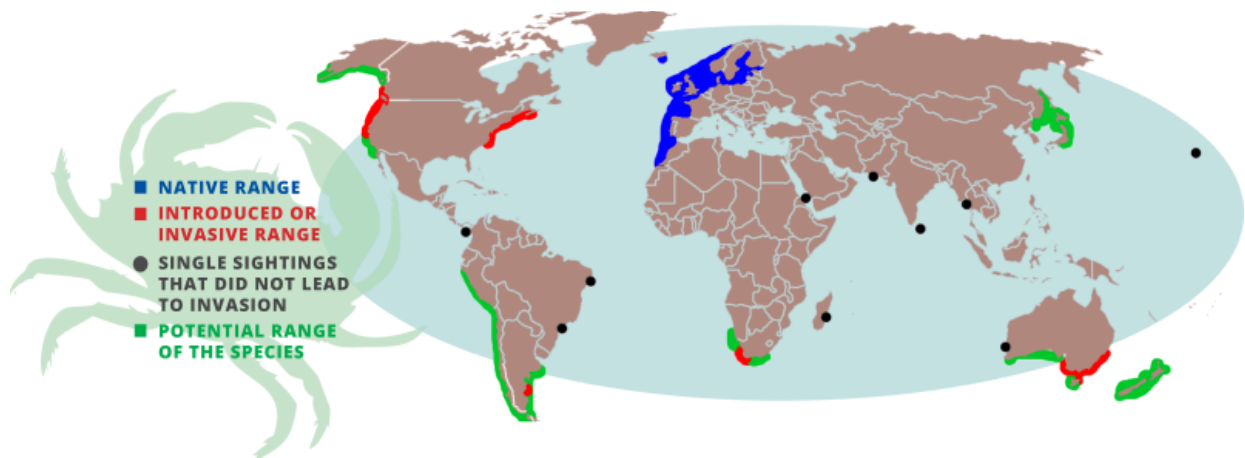
The green crab is considered one of the most invasive species in the marine environment. It has few predators, aggressively hunts and eats its prey, destroys seagrass, and outcompetes local species for food and habitat. It has been documented that green crab devour juvenile king crab as well as juvenile salmon. They also destroy eelgrass habitat that larval fish use to hide from predators, and outcompete Dungeness crabs for food and habitat. Green crab could potentially damage Alaska's multi-billion dollar fisheries industries, especially for salmon, crab, and mariculture operations. Resource managers in Alaska have been keeping an eye on the invasive crab's northward movement for years.



Invasive Green Crab. Photo: Linda Shaw, NOAA Fisheries

How did they get here?

Green crabs were first introduced to North America in the 1800s, likely hitching a ride in the ballast water of merchant ships from Europe. Experts believe the invasive crab was transported to the West Coast in ballast water as well. They may also be transported with shellfish, equipment, or packing materials in aquaculture operations. Larval green crabs can also spread from one invaded area to another in ocean currents. On July 19, 2022, the Metlakatla Indian Community Department of Fish & Wildlife confirmed the first observation of the invasive green crabs in the State of Alaska on Annette Islands Reserve. This map shows the range of green crab throughout the world with their native range in blue and all other colors indicating areas they invaded or have the potential to spread.



Range map of invasive crab (Carcinus maenas). Source: NOAA Alaska Region Fisheries