

# LOOK OUT FOR INVASIVE EUROPEAN GREEN CRAB

## What is an invasive animal?

The European green crab is an invasive animal that may come to Alaska. Invasive animals come from other parts of the world and can be harmful to the environment, natural resources, humans, and the economy.

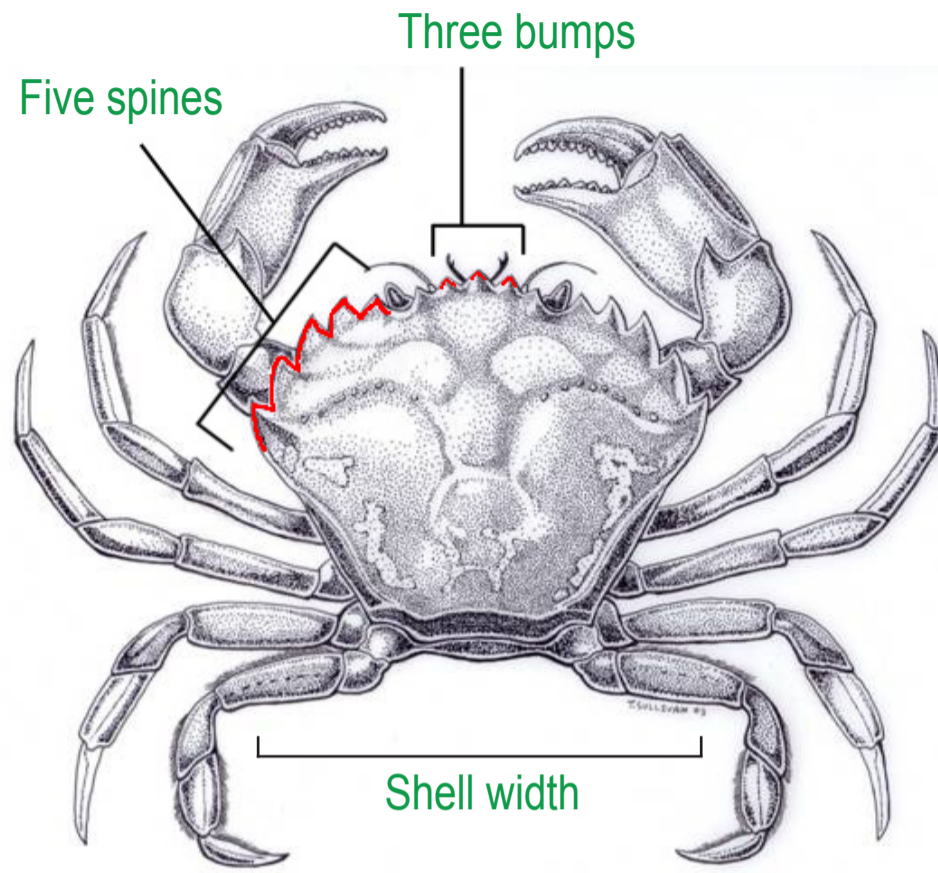
Green crabs eat clams, oysters, mussels, marine worms and small crustaceans that are important foods for native aquatic species. Once established in Alaska, green crabs could pose a serious threat to native crabs, including the young of commercial crabs, as well as to clam and oyster fisheries.

## How do they get here?

European green crabs probably came to the U.S. in ships' ballast water. 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.

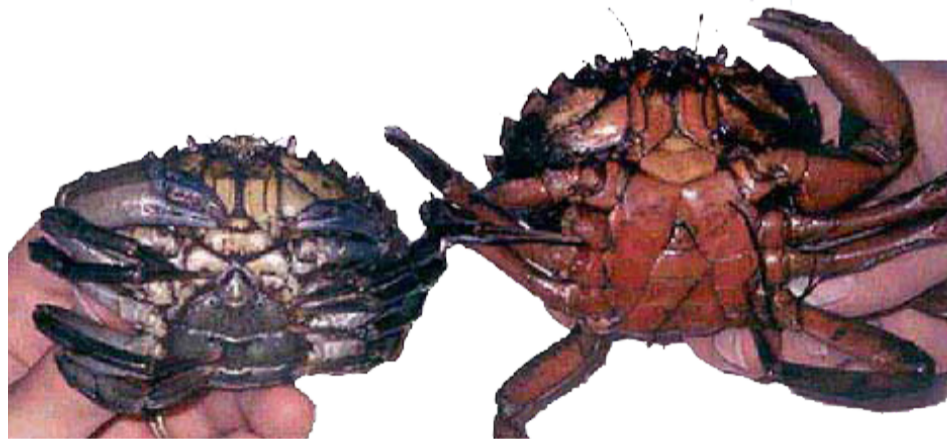
Scientists and resource managers generally agree that with climate change warming Alaska waters, it is no longer a matter of 'if' but 'where and when' green crabs will arrive in Alaska.



Green crabs can be identified by their unique shell shape. Adults can have shells up to four inches across in width.



Green crab shell color



Female (left) and male (right) green crab shell undersides

## How do I identify a green crab?

European green crabs are not always green! The top of the shell may be mottled dark brown to dark green, with small yellow patches. The bottom may be orange or red during molting.

The best way to identify them is to count the spines. There are 5 spines on each side of the front of the shell, and 3 bumps between the eyes.

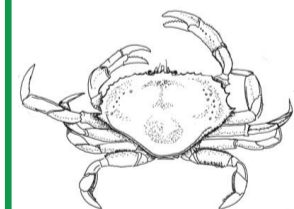
Adult shells can be up to 4 inches across.

## Where should I look?

Green crabs live on rocky shores, cobble beaches, sandflats and tidal marshes. They can often be found near eelgrass beds or other shoreline vegetation.

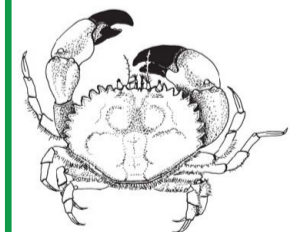
Green crabs tolerate a wide range of water salinity and temperature. They can also survive upstream of river mouths in some estuarine environments.

### Common Alaskan Crabs



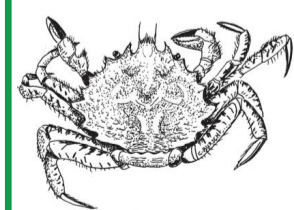
Dungeness crab

- Uneven oval shell with 10 spines on each side
- Narrow frontal area with 5 unequal spines
- Light-colored leg tips



Pygmy cancer crab

- Large claws with black tips
- Nearly circular shell
- Legs very hairy



Helmet or horse crab

- Large jagged spines on each side of the shell
- Entire shell covered with stiff hairs
- Frontal area extends past eyes

## What if I find one?

If you find a green crab, do not throw it back alive! Keep it in a container with the date and location you found it; freeze it or preserve it with rubbing alcohol; and call 1-877-INVASIV.

The collected crab will be needed to confirm its identification.

If you are interested in learning more about citizen-based invasive species monitoring, call 1-877-INVASIV or one of the other agencies listed here.

Alaska Department of Fish & Game  
1-877-INVASIV  
(1-877-468-2748)  
Toll-free statewide

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service  
907-786-3813  
Anchorage

NOAA National Marine Fisheries Service  
907-586-7510  
Juneau

Kachemak Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve  
907-235-6377  
Homer

Learn more about citizen monitoring & invasive species in Alaska on the web: [www.cnipm.org](http://www.cnipm.org) (plants) or [www.alaskainvasives.org](http://www.alaskainvasives.org) (all species)



# 1-877-INVASIV

Green crab diagram: Tim Sullivan. Green crab with hand & green crab male/female: Washington Dept. of Fish & Wildlife. Green crab photo: Fisheries and Oceans, Canada. Common Alaskan Crabs: Catie Bursch, ADF&G, KBNERR. Funding support from NOAA, USFWS, & PWSRCAC. Printing supplied by AKDNR. Design and layout by Deena Jallen, UAF-CES. UAF is an affirmative action/equal opportunity employer and educational institution.

