INVASIVE ANIMALS

European green crab look-alikes

Carcinus maenas

MAY 2024

Invasive Species Council of BC

ABOUT

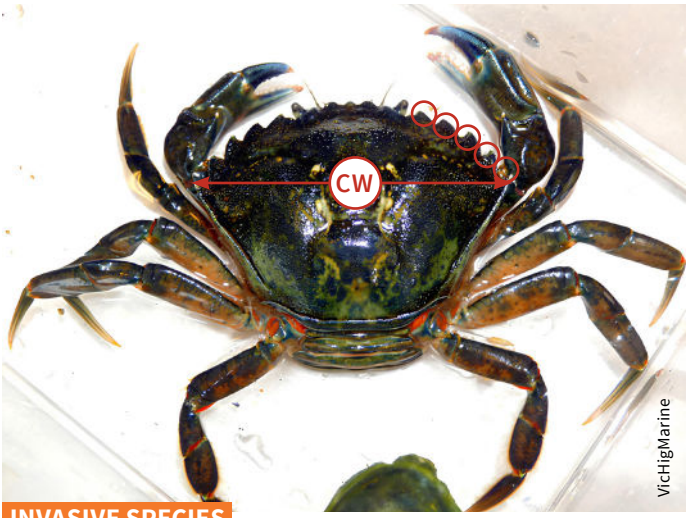
The European green crab (*Carcinus maenas*) is a global invasive crustacean that is destructive to estuarine and marine ecosystems, threatening biodiversity.

The four main identifying characteristics are:

- five spines on the side of each eye
- pentagon-shaped shell
- three rounded lobes between the eyes
- hairy, pointed and flattened back leg tips

If European green crab is found, please capture a clear photo and precise GPS coordinates if possible and call 1-888-356-7525 OR email: DFO.AISPacific-EAEPacifique.MPO@dfo-mpo.gc.ca

Actual Size: 6-10 cm carapace width (CW).



INVASIVE SPECIES

Female European green crab with eggs.

LOOK-ALIKES

These species can be commonly mistaken as European green crab throughout their juvenile and adult stages. Many crabs have a wide variation in colour which should not be used for identification in most cases. (Photos do not represent actual size.)

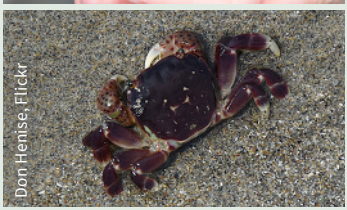
NATIVE SPECIES
Dungeness crab
(Metacarcinus magister)
Actual size: 20 cm CW

NATIVE SPECIES
Graceful crab
(Metacarcinus gracilis)
Actual size: 9 cm CW

NATIVE SPECIES
Hairy shore crab
(Hemigrapsus oregonensis)
Actual size: 5 cm CW

NATIVE SPECIES
Helmet crab
(Telmessus cheiragonus)
Actual size: 10 cm CW

NATIVE SPECIES
Northern kelp crab
(Pugettia producta)
Actual size: 7-9 cm CW



NATIVE SPECIES
Purple shore crab
(Hemigrapsus nudus)
Actual size: 5 cm CW

NATIVE SPECIES
Red rock crab
(Cancer productus)
Actual size: 17-20 cm CW

IMPACTS IN BC

Your help and vigilance are needed to protect our marine ecosystems. European green crabs destroy eelgrass beds and feed upon species that live in these critical habitats like oysters, clams, juvenile crustaceans and small fish including juvenile salmon. This invasive crab poses a risk to biodiversity, fishing and aquaculture industries through predation and out- competing other species for food and shelter.

Sockeye salmon.

Eelgrass bed.

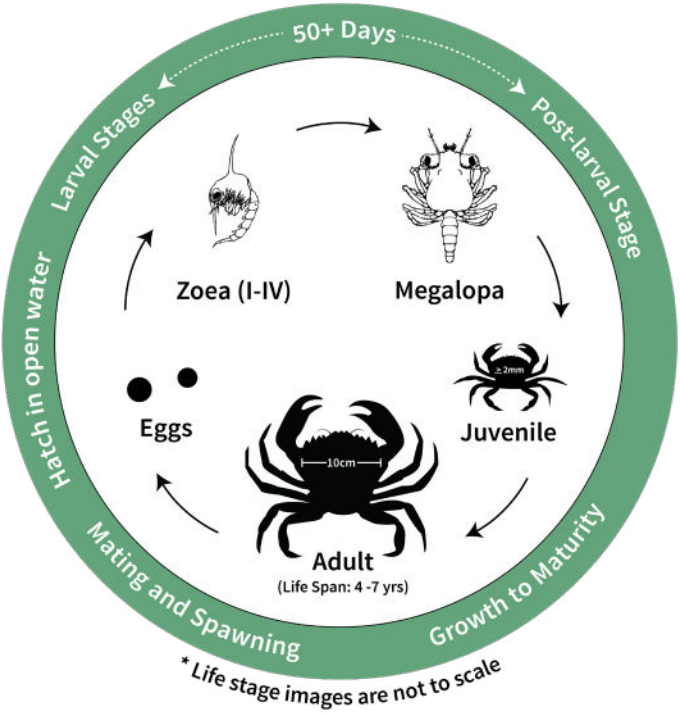
California cone snail eggs on eelgrass.

Brant eating eelgrass.

Haida Gwaii Estuarine habitat.

LIFE CYCLE

Female European green crabs can spawn up to 185,000 eggs at a time, and once released as larvae, they can be easily transported for up to 90 days drifting along ocean currents. They can also be introduced to new areas by hitchhiking undetected in ballast tanks of ships, on recreational boats and gear and commercially packaged shellfish.




Chika Watanabe, Flickr

Crabs can spread by hitchhiking on boats and gear or in packaged shellfish.

Crabs can spread through ballast water transfers of ocean going ships.

COLOUR MORPHS - MORE THAN JUST GREEN

FIND OUT MORE

For more information or to be added to our eNews, please visit bcinvasives.ca/invasives/european-green-crab

BCINVASIVES.CA
info@bcinvasives.ca
1-888-933-3722

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ADDITIONAL CONTACT INFO