



Photo: Phil Westra



Chinese Mitten Crab



Chinese mitten crab. Photo: Dave Kelch, Ohio Sea Grant, Bugwood.org



Chinese mitten crab. Photo: Phil Westra, Bugwood.org

What Is It?

The Chinese mitten crab (*Eriocheir sinensis*) is light brown to green, with brown hairy patches resembling mittens on its claws. It spends most of its life in freshwater, but reproduces in saltwater. The Chinese mitten crab can prey on and compete with many native aquatic species, posing a threat to the environment and fish stocks. It is native to Asia.

Is It Here Yet?

No. The Chinese mitten crab has been reported, but not confirmed, in the Pacific Northwest. It is in San Francisco Bay and upstream of the bay.

Why Should I Care?

This crab preys on and competes with many native water species, including clams, mussels, and fish eggs. Its burrowing can damage levees and riverbanks, and lead to clogging of fish screens and pipes, hampering water delivery. It may carry lung flukes, which can infect humans, particularly when a crab is eaten uncooked as a delicacy. The mitten crab has been known to steal bait off hooks and damage fishing nets.

What Are Its Characteristics?

- Brown hairy patches resembling mittens on white-tipped, equal-sized claws.
- Light brown to green, with a deep notch between the eyes.
- The carapace, or top shell, measures up to 3 inches with 4 prominent spines on either side, and legs are typically twice as long as the carapace is

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wide.

- Juvenile's claws may not be hairy if the carapace is less than 1 inch wide.

How Do I Distinguish It From Native Species?

A crab observed in freshwater is most likely a Chinese mitten crab.

How Can We Stop It?

Report sightings of Chinese mitten crabs, and put caught mitten crabs on ice. The Chinese mitten crab is classified as a Prohibited Aquatic Animal Species in Washington, meaning it may not be possessed, purchased, sold, propagated, transported, or released into state waters. The importation of this crab is regulated further by the federal Lacey Act, under which it is listed as an Injurious Wildlife Species.

What Should I Do If I Find One?

Report immediately via the WA Invasives mobile app or reporting web form at <https://invasivespecies.wa.gov/report-a-sighting/>.



Chinese mitten crab. Photo: Phil Westra, Bugwood.org



Underside of Chinese mitten crab. Photo: Howard Schwartz, Bugwood.org