



Photo: Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife



European Green Crab



An adult European green crab.



A gravid female European green crab.

 **Report Sightings**



invasivespecies.wa.gov

All photos on this factsheet are all courtesy of the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife.

What Is It?

The European green crab (*Carcinus maenas*) is a small shore crab that is not necessarily green like its name implies. It typically is found in high intertidal areas and marshes in coastal estuaries and wave-protected embayments. It can live on a variety of surfaces including sand, mudflats, shells, cobble, algae, and rock. It is an opportunistic feeder and aggressive invader that is native to the eastern Atlantic from Norway to North Africa.

Is It Here Yet?

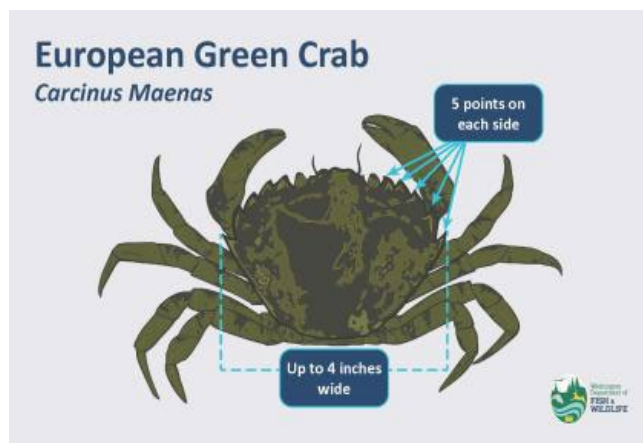
Yes. Infestations have been found along Washington's coast including near the Columbia River, Willapa Bay, Grays Harbor, and Makah Bay. Small populations of the crab have been found along the Strait of Juan de Fuca, in the San Juan Islands, and in northwest Washington bays around Anacortes and Bellingham. Lummi Sea Pond near Bellingham also has a sizable infestation. The European green crab has not been found in Puget Sound south of Hood Canal and central Whidbey Island or in Skagit Bay.

Why Should I Care?

The European green crab eats smaller crustaceans and many other plants and animals and can have dramatic negative impacts to native shore crab, clam, and oyster populations. The green crab is believed to have caused the collapse of the soft-shell clam industry in New England. Its digging habits also have slowed eelgrass restoration efforts. The European green crab also may impact the health of shore birds by transmitting the worm *Profilicollis botulus*.

What Are Its Characteristics?

- Juveniles are speckled with green, black, white, and rust.
- Adults vary in color from reddish to dark green and often are mottled olive-brown with black and yellow spots.
- Adult undersides may be green, pale orange, or red. The adult male's carapace grows up to 4 inches across.
- The green crab is found along the shore, typically in less than 25 feet of water. It prefers areas protected from ocean waves or currents, such as mudflats, tidal sloughs, and river mouths.



The European green crab can be identified by five points or spines on either side of its eyes.

How Do I Distinguish It From Native Species?

It can be distinguished from native shore crab species by the five spines on both sides of the shell behind its eyes.

How Can We Stop It?

Trapping is the main tactic used to control this crab. For people who own beaches, tidelands or shellfish beds, support and permits for trapping of the European green crab may be available. The public should not kill the suspected European green crab at this time. This is to protect native crabs, which have been misidentified as the green crab and killed. The European green crab is classified as a Prohibited Aquatic Animal Species in Washington, meaning they may not be possessed, purchased, sold, propagated, transported, or released into state waters.

What Should I Do If I Find One?

Watch for the European green crab when at the beach or in shallow coastal water. Help prevent its spread by taking a photo, recording the location, and reporting it through the Washington Invasives App, the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife reporting form: <https://wdfw.wa.gov/species-habitats/invasive/greatest-concern/egc>, or by calling 1-888-WDFW-AIS.