

GUIDE TO MARINE INVADERS IN THE GULF OF MAINE

Carcinus maenas

European green crab



Robert Buchsbaum



Andrew Martinez

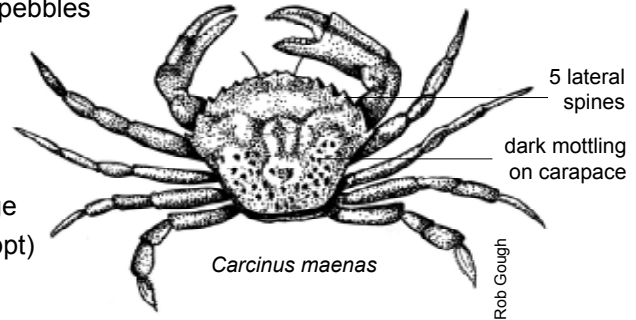
Female *Carcinus maenas* carrying eggs

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

- 5 lateral spines on each side of carapace (shell)
- Color variable: green, reddish orange, or tan carapace with darker mottling
- Carapace width up to 3.6 in (7.6 cm)

HABITAT PREFERENCE

- Occurs in the lower intertidal and nearshore subtidal zones, usually on mud, sand, or pebbles
- Prefers sheltered areas
- Common in salt marshes, sandy beaches, and rocky shores
- Able to tolerate wide range of salinities (as low as 6 ppt)



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INVASION STATUS & ECOLOGICAL CONCERNS

Abundant in all nearshore subtidal habitats, *Carcinus maenas* is native to the North Atlantic coast of Europe and the North African coast. It is believed to have first arrived in eastern North America around 1817, most likely in the dry ballast of cargo ships. The species has since established itself from Delaware to Nova Scotia and is the most common crab species in many locations throughout this range. An omnivorous scavenger, this crab is one of New England's dominant benthic predators, feeding on clams, oysters, crabs and mollusks. It is often blamed for the collapse of Maine's soft shell clam industry.

SIMILAR SPECIES



Non-native

Robert Buchsbaum

Hemigrapsus sanguineus
Asian shore crab

- 3 lateral spines
- Banded legs
- Carapace more squarely shaped than green crab
- Prefers rocks, cobble habitat
- Occurs in subtidal and lower intertidal zones



European green crab
Carcinus maenas

Asian shore crab
Hemigrapsus sanguineus

Salem Sound Coastwatch

This identification card is one of a series produced by Salem Sound Coastwatch (www.salemsound.org) highlighting introduced species that pose a threat to the marine environments of Massachusetts and the Gulf of Maine. The original development of these cards was funded by the MA EOEAA Office of Coastal Zone Management with funding from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. For additional species information or to report sightings, please visit www.mass.gov/czm/invasives/monitor/reporting.htm.

