

GUIDE TO MARINE INVADERS IN RI COASTAL WATERS

Carcinus maenas

European green crab



Robert Buchsbaum



Andrew Martinez

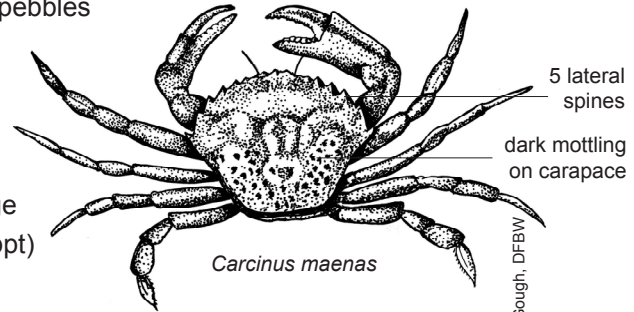
Female *Carcinus maenas* carrying eggs

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



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

Non-native



Salem Sound Coastwatch

European green crab
Carcinus maenas

Asian shore crab
Hemigrapsus sanguineus

This card is adapted from an original series produced by Salem Sound Coastwatch (www.salemsound.org). The original series was funded by the MA EOEAA Office of Coastal Zone Management with funding from the U.S.F.W.S. For more information please visit www.mass.gov/czm/invasives/monitor/reporting.htm. The production of this adapted card was funded by the RI Coastal Resources Management Council with funding from the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. To report findings please email kcute@crmc.ri.gov or call (401) 783-7772 or (401) 783-3370.