

# Selected Crabs of Oregon, Washington, Alaska, and British Columbia



Identification Guide  
(Crabs shown are not in proportion to each other.)

## Helmet or Horse Crab *Telmessus cheiragonus*



Six unequal, jagged spines (teeth) on each side of carapace (shell). Widest at 4th spine. Frontal area protrudes in front of eyes. Entire body covered with stiff, bristly hairs. Long, bristly antennae. Spiny, short front claws.

## Hairy Oregon Shore Crab *Hemigrapsus oregonensis*



Three spines on each side of rectangular carapace. Two lobes on frontal area. Hairy legs; no spots on claws.

## Purple Shore Crab *Hemigrapsus nudus*



Three spines on each side of rectangular carapace. Frontal area slightly rounded, without prominent lobes. Smooth, hairless legs. Claws with spots.

## Lined Shore Crab *Pachygrapsus crassipes*



Two spines just behind eyes. Smooth frontal area. Broad, compressed legs with bristles. Transverse lines across carapace.

NOTE: The lined shore crab is not found in Alaska.

## Kelp Crab *Pugettia producta*



Surface smooth; carapace longer than wide, with 3 spines. Last 2 most prominent. Widest at 3rd spine. Frontal area composed of 2 small preorbital spines and prominent 2-forked rostrum protruding beyond eyes. Serrated claws; slender, cylindrical walking legs.

## Black-Clawed Crab *Lophopanopeus bellus*



Smooth, oval-shaped carapace with 3 lobelike spines on either side. Frontal area straight. Smooth, stout claws, unequal in size, with black fingers; large spine at base of movable finger. Velvetlike hairs on walking legs.

## Red Rock Crab *Cancer productus*



Fan-shaped carapace with 10 spines becoming more acute at posterior. Widest at 9th spine. Frontal area protrudes beyond eyes, with 5 spines. Large claws with black tips. Tip of walking legs fringed with hairs.

## Pygmy Cancer Crab *Cancer oregonensis*



Carapace oval with knobs and grooves. Widest at 7th or 8th spine. Frontal area with 5 spines. Outer spines are more prominent. Stout claws with black fingers. Hairy, light-colored walking legs.

**Dungeness Crab**  
*Cancer magister*



Broadly oval carapace with 10 spines. Last spine is very sharp. Carapace widest at 10th spine. Narrow frontal area with 5 unequal spines. Serrations on upper margin of claws. Light-colored leg tips.

**Graceful Crab**  
*Cancer gracilis*



Smooth, convex carapace, widest at 9th spine. Margins of spine are outlined in cream. Frontal area with 5 spines. Central spine is smaller. No serration on upper margin of white-tipped claws. Slender, purple or reddish walking legs.

**Pacific Rock Crab**  
*Cancer antennarius*



Fan-shaped carapace, widest at 9th spine. Frontal area with 5 spines. Central spine is smaller. Large, smooth, black-tipped claws. Red spots on claw and underside. Hairy legs.

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For threatening our native species and habitats

**European Green Crab**  
*Carcinus maenas*

Five spines on each side of the fan-shaped carapace. Three rounded lobes on frontal area. Last pair of legs somewhat flattened.



**Green crab has been widely viewed as an invasive species. In places where it has become abundant, it has reduced the number of native shellfish. Once green crab is caught, it is unlawful to return it to state waters.**



*Green crab underside view of male (top) and female (bottom)*

**Chinese Mitten Crab**  
*Eriocheir sinensis*

Furlike hairs on the claws of adults. Four spines on each side of carapace. Legs more than twice as long as the width of the carapace.



**Native to Asia, mitten crabs recently have invaded California waters. Juvenile crabs live in brackish water or freshwater and migrate to estuarine breeding grounds when mature. Mitten crabs cause major economic and ecological damage.**

**If you see what you believe is a GREEN CRAB or a MITTEN CRAB, please collect it, freeze it, record the precise date and location found, and contact your nearest department of fish and wildlife office.**

**Oregon: 1-866-INVADER    Alaska: 877-468-2748  
Washington: 360-902-2700    B.C.: 250-756-7223**