

# BEST PRACTICES



## Crab Team Update on the Invasive European Green Crab

Since 2015, Washington Sea Grant Crab Team staff, volunteers, and collaborators have been monitoring for the European green crab (*Carcinus maenas*), listed as one of the world's worst invasive species. The European green crab is native to Europe and northern Africa and has been introduced to North America, Australia, parts of South America and South Africa. Like many invasive species, it outcompetes and impacts native species and degrades habitat. The European green crab has effected native crab and local shellfish populations throughout the United States. Crab Team's volunteer-based, early detection monitoring network, works to prevent these crabs from reaching Washington's inland shorelines.

Crab Team currently monitors 56 sites once a month, April through September. Other stakeholder groups work to locate, trap and remove the green crabs. Since 2015, combined efforts have resulted in more than 20,000 traps set, capturing a total of 320 crabs. Of the 320 crabs, 222 were trapped at Dungeness Spit, near Sequim along the Strait of Juan de Fuca and another 38 crabs were captured in Drayton Harbor, near the Canadian border. These two sites are considered "hot spots" and account for 80% of the 320 green crabs captured along Washington's inland shorelines. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has been working to manage the Dungeness Spit green crab population and the population at Drayton Harbor which was discovered in 2019; trapping efforts continue and discussions about management strategies are ongoing.

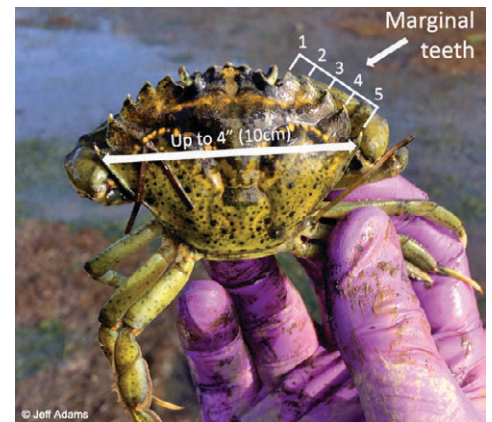
Early detection is key to keeping the spread of green crabs under control. Monitoring efforts continue in the South Sound where there is abundant green crab habitat and natural resources are both ecologically and economically vulnerable. Crab Team continues to monitor sites in Thurston County, and Admiralty Inlet as well as sites in Tacoma and on Anderson Island.

### How you can help

Familiarize yourself with how to identify green crabs and distinguish them from native crab species. The best way to identify European green crabs is their 5 jagged spines (marginal teeth) near the outside of each eye. This feature is distinct among crabs. Dungeness crabs have 10 spines and native shore crabs have 3. *Note: color is not an accurate way to identify these crabs as its color varies and can be mistaken for several of our native green colored crab species.*

Keep your eyes open. On your next beach walk, pay close attention to the crab shells you find washed up on shore. Most green crab invasions are detected from shells that have been shed rather than live crabs. The more people on the lookout for green crabs, the better the chances are to protect Washington shorelines.

To report a crab sighting or to join Crab Team's volunteer network, visit <https://wsg.washington.edu/crabteam/getinvolved>.



Source: Stream Team News, Spring 2020