



Preventative Monitoring for Marine Invasive Species



European Green Crabs

What are marine invasive species?

Invasive species are non-native species that cause or are likely to cause harm to the environment, economy and/or human health. Invasive species often consume native species and/or out compete them for food and habitat. Human activities are largely responsible for introducing invasive species in marine ecosystems (e.g., ballast water / biofouling of ship hulls, release of exotic aquarium species, transport on plastic waste).

What are European Green Crabs?

The European Green Crab (*Carcinus maenas*) is a small crustacean native to coastal Europe and North Africa. These invaders were first found on the West Coast of North America in 1991, and have since spread north to Washington, British Columbia, and Alaska. They are characterized by five spines or teeth on either side of their eyes, along with three blunt bumps between the eyes. Named for their green coloration on the dorsal side (top) of their carapace, European Green Crabs vary from light to dark mottled green to yellow-green or even orange red depending on how recently they have molted. Relatively small crustaceans, these crabs typically have a carapace width that can range up to 6cm in length and 9cm wide once reaching adulthood.

European Green Crabs are considered one of the top 100 worst invaders by IUCN Species Survival Commission Invasive Species Specialist Group. Their ability to inhabit a wide range of habitat types allows them to outcompete juvenile native crab species such as Dungeness and King Crabs, while also decimating eelgrass beds with their burrowing behavior. While not currently found within Glacier Bay National Park, the National Park Service has joined the Alaska European Green Crab Rapid Response Task Force and conducts preventative early detection.

If you think you've seen a European Green Crab:

Call the Alaska Invasive Species Hotline at 1-877-[INVASIV](tel:1-877-INVASIV) or email Alexandra Gulick, GLBA Marine Ecologist at Alexandra_Gulick@nps.gov

Photos: (Top) European Green Crab (Credit: M. Media); (Bottom) European Green Crab in seaweed with an arrow pointing to one of the identifying spines (Credit: M. Media)

