Estuarine mud crab

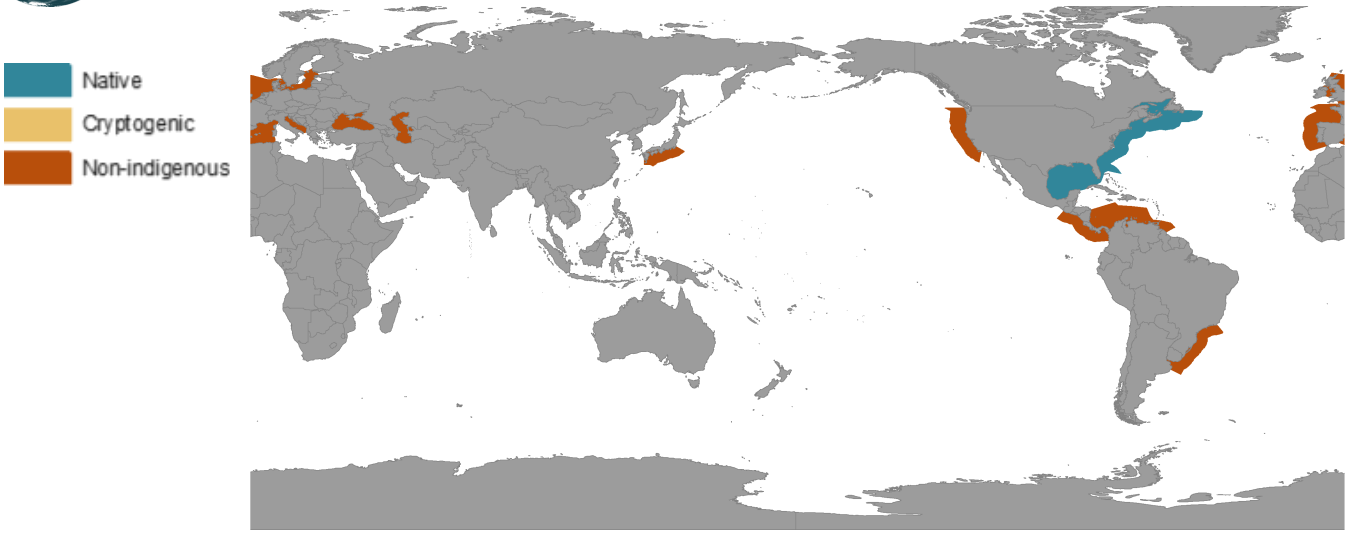
Rhithropanopeus harrisii (Gould, 1841)

KEY FEATURES

- Small mud crab, carapace less than 26 mm wide, greatest width between fourth pair of lateral teeth lining the sides
- Chelae claws are unequal in size and shape with strong, curved dactyl (the end of the claw), walking legs are long, slender, compressed and somewhat hairy
- Generally brownish green in colour with maroon blotches, but often stained with mud, chelae are light at the tips with spots on the upper surface
- Tolerant of broad salinity range, typically associated with sheltered estuarine habitats down to 37 m depth, including oyster reefs; also found on woody debris and shoreline vegetation

PATHWAY

✓ ballast water ✓ biofouling ✓ aquaculture transfer



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Rhithropanopeus harrisii (Gould, 1841)

IMPACTS

Environmental impacts

Competes with native crabs and benthos-feeding fish in Europe and on North America West Coast, altering food webs by serving as predator and prey of native species. Possibly displaced a native species of freshwater crayfish in Texas. Can be a potential host of white spot baculoviruses, which can be transmitted to native crustaceans

Human health impacts

None known

Social & cultural impacts

None known

Economic impacts

High densities in Texan impoundments and in the Caspian Sea. Has been reported to cause fouling problems in water intake pipes of shoreline properties and also of nuclear power plants. Reported to cause economic losses to Caspian Sea gill net fishermen by spoiling fish

ADDITIONAL DETAILS

- This species is often confused with small local crabs
- Larvae go through four zoea stages and one megalopa, first crab stage reached after 11 to 43 days depending on temperature and salinity conditions

DISTRIBUTION

Native range East coast of North America, from the Miramichi Estuary in New Brunswick, Canada, to Veracruz in the Gulf of Mexico

Non-indigenous range California, Netherlands, Germany, Ukraine, Russia, Poland, Denmark, France, Japan, Panama

CREDITS AND REFERENCES (click reference for more information)

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References Roche & Torchin (2007), Zaitsev & Öztürk (2001), Keith (2008)

SPREP Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme

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Pacific Invasive Species BATTLER

UN environment programme