

Asian paddle crab

Portunidae - *Charybdis japonica*



What does it look like?

Asian paddle crabs are relatively large swimming crabs with paddle-like hind legs. The upper shell of adults can reach 12cm across and is covered in small hairs (which are not always visible). The adults also have six distinct spines or spikes on each side of the shell below the eyes. There are five prominent spines on the upper surface of each claw. The crabs range in colour from pale-green or olive-green to a deep chestnut-brown with purplish markings on the shell.

In its native range of South East Asia, the Asian paddle crab occurs in inter-tidal and sub-tidal habitats to depths of about 15m, including sandy, muddy or rocky reefs. In New Zealand they are typically found in estuaries where there is firm sand, muddy fine sand, or muddy-shelly fine sand.

Why is it a problem?

These crabs are very aggressive and have the potential to compete with native crabs for space and food. They are generalist predators and also prey on native species including shellfish, fish, other crustaceans and polychaete worms.

Adult paddle crabs can produce hundreds of thousands of offspring annually; with female egg production averaging at 85,000 eggs which they may release several times per year. The larvae are able to withstand a wide range of water temperatures and salinities and can float in the water for three to four weeks, during which time they can be moved large distances by tides and currents.

Control methods

You must notify the Environment Southland or the Ministry for Primary Industries if you suspect the presence of this organism.

You can help prevent the spread of marine pests by:

- Regularly cleaning your boat's hull – ideally keep fouling growth to no more than a light slime layer.
- Applying a thorough coating of antifouling paint and keep it in good condition.
- Ensuring your hull is clean and free of fouling before you travel to a new area.
- Cleaning and drying any marine equipment (e.g. ropes, lines and pots) before using in a new area.
- Inspecting areas on your boat that retain water for signs of marine life.
- Checking for aquatic weeds tangled around anchors, trailers and other equipment.

Request info

<https://eservices.es.govt.nz/online-services/new/BiosecurityRFS/step/1?Subject=MarinePest&Species=573>

Report this Pest/Weed

<https://eservices.es.govt.nz/online-services/new/BiosecurityIncident/step/1?Subject=MarinePest&Species=573>

Notify Council

If you have seen or suspect the presence of Asian paddle crab you must report the sighting to Environment Southland immediately.

Management programme

- Exclusion

Summary of rules

- If you detect or suspect the presence of Asian paddle crab within the Southland region, you must immediately report its presence and location to Environment Southland.

For full rules please see the [Southland Regional Pest Management Plan](#) (Rule 2).

- You can not possess, keep, hold, enclose or otherwise harbour Asian paddle crab within the Southland Region.

For full rules please see the [Southland Regional Pest Management Plan](#) (Rule 3).