



CHINESE MITTEN CRAB UPDATE

U.S. Atlantic Coast Bays & Rivers

May 2010

Please Report Any Sightings of This Crab



Mitten Crabs in the Eastern U.S. To date, there have been a total of one hundred forty-seven live Chinese Mitten Crabs (*Eriocheir sinensis*) reported and confirmed in the eastern United States. These crabs were found in Chesapeake Bay (2005-2007, 2009), Delaware Bay (2007, 2009-2010), Hudson River (2007-2010), and in New Jersey (2008-2010).

In 2010 twenty Mitten Crabs have been captured in the lower Hudson River by crab dredging consisting of twenty females carrying eggs and one adult male, a female in the upper Toms River in New Jersey, and a male found in the Delaware Bay by Collins Beach, Delaware.

The Chinese Mitten Crab is native to East Asia, and could have negative ecological and economic impacts. Mitten Crabs are already established invaders in Europe and on the West Coast of the United States. We don't know the current distribution of crab in the eastern U.S or where it may have established reproductive populations. The crab is listed as Injurious Wildlife under the Federal Lacey Act, which makes it illegal in the United States to import, export, or conduct interstate commerce of Mitten Crabs without a permit.

Life History. The Chinese Mitten Crab occurs in both freshwater and saltwater. Young crabs spend two-five years in freshwater tributaries and can extend many miles upstream of bays and estuaries. Mature male and female crabs migrate downstream to mate and spawn in saltwater estuaries. Chinese Mitten Crabs burrow into banks and levees along estuaries and are able to leave the water to walk around obstacles while migrating.

Please Report Any New Sightings. To determine the status, abundance, and distribution of this species along the eastern U.S., we have established a Mitten Crab Network. The Network began as a partnership among several state, federal, and research organizations, with an initial focus on Chesapeake and Delaware Bays. We have now expanded the Network to include resource managers, commercial fishermen, research organizations, and citizens along the eastern U.S.

Please help by reporting any mitten crabs directly to the Network or to your state resource manager.

Identification

- Commonly found in fresh waters of North America, but can occur in saltwater bays and estuaries
- Claws equal in size with white tips and appear furry (with thick mats of hair-like covering on claws)
- If you find a crab, with a carapace length over one inch and no hair on the claws, it is NOT likely to be a Mitten Crab
NOTE: Juveniles under one inch may not have hair on the claws.
- Carapace up to 4 inches wide; light brown to olive green in color
- No swimming legs. This crab has eight sharp-tipped walking legs

If you catch a mitten crab

- Do not throw it back alive!
- Freeze the animal, keep it on ice, or preserve it in rubbing alcohol as a last resort
- Note the precise location and date where the animal was found
- Please take a close-up photo of the animal. Photos can be emailed to SERCMittenCrab@si.edu for preliminary identification
Include your contact information with the photo
- If you cannot take a photo, contact the **Mitten Crab Hotline (443-482-2222)**

REMEMBER THE LAW! Never transport a live Mitten Crab across state boundaries.

For additional information please visit http://www.serc.si.edu/labs/marine_invasions/ for updated Mitten Crab reports, downloadable pamphlets on the Chinese Mitten Crab Survey Program, and how to distinguish a Mitten Crab from other crabs in the region.