Crab Team ID Guide

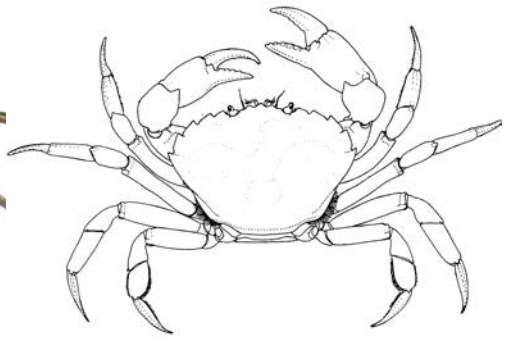
Species most likely to be encountered: **M** *As molts* **C** *In coastal estuaries* **I** *At inland sites*

Sea Grant Washington

European Green Crab - CAMA

Carcinus maenas

- Carapace: oval to 90mm; 5 prominent marginal teeth, 3 rostral bumps
- Claws: not rounded, occasionally with blue tips
- Walking legs: last pair slightly flattened
- Color: green, brown, or reddish, often with orange joints

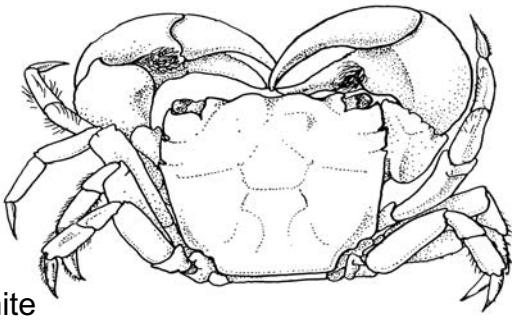


All crabs should be measured to widest point of shell, including any spines.

Hairy Shore Crab – HEOR

Hemigrapsus oregonensis

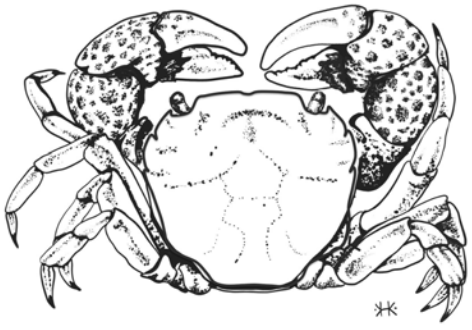
- Carapace: square to 50mm; 3 forward-pointing marginal teeth, 2 rostral bumps
- Claws: rounded, often w/ fleshy tufts, no large polka dots
- Walking legs: with fine sparse hairs
- Color: variable, green, brown, yellow, white



Purple Shore Crab – HENU

Hemigrapsus nudus

- Carapace: as HEOR above, but to 60mm, marginal teeth rounded inward, 2 rostral bumps less pronounced than HEOR
- Claws: as HEOR, but often with polka dots
- Walking legs: no hairs
- Color: variable, purple, red, yellow, green



Lined Shore Crab – PACR

Pachygrapsus crassipes

- Carapace: square to 48mm, with only 2 marginal teeth, 2 reduced rostral bumps
- Claws: as HENU, without polka dots
- Walking legs: mostly bare but coarse spine-like hairs on tips of legs
- Color: dark red-purple with green lines

If your organism is not in this guide, check the Volunteer Toolbox at: wsg.washington.edu/crabteam for the species code

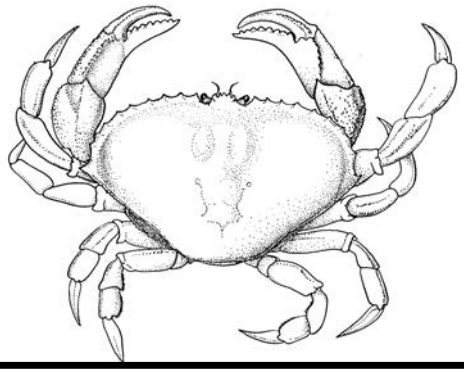
Cancrid Crabs

Species most likely to be encountered: **M** *As molts* **C** *In coastal estuaries* **I** *At inland sites*

Dungeness Crab – MEMA

Cancer (Metacarcinus) magister

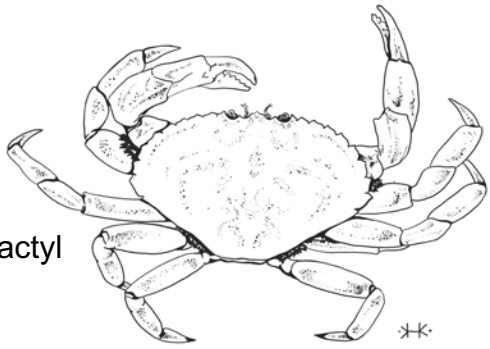
- Carapace: oval to 230mm; 10 marginal teeth and widest at pronounced 10th tooth
- Claws: serrations on upper edge of dactyl
- Walking legs: long light-colored with hairs
- Color: light reddish-brown to purple



Graceful Crab – MEGR

Cancer (Metacarcinus) gracilis

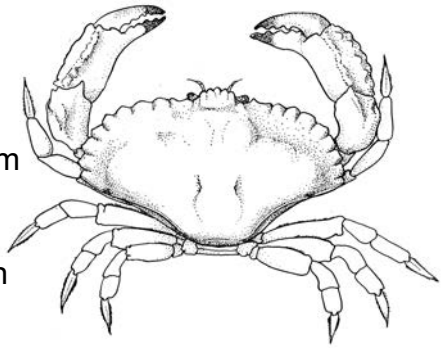
- Carapace: as MEMA but to 115mm and widest at 9th tooth. 10th tooth appears as a notch behind widest point.
- Claws: no serrations on upper edge of dactyl
- Walking legs: long purplish hairless
- Color: light reddish-brown to purple



Red Rock Crab – CAPR

Cancer productus

- Carapace: fan to 200mm; 10 rounded, blunt marginal teeth, 5 bumps on protruding rostrum
- Claws: large, muscular, with black tips
- Walking legs: small and thin
- Color: bright red to brown; variable patterns in juveniles including stripes and blotches



Pacific Rock Crab – ROAN

Cancer (Romaleon) antennarius

- Carapace: fan to 178mm; 10 curved marginal teeth more pointed than CAPR
- Claws: large, muscular, with black tips
- Walking legs: hairy, similar length as CAPR
- Color: reddish brown to brown; red spots on underside are diagnostic

Pygmy rock crab – GLOR

Cancer (Glebocarcinus) oregonensis

- Carapace: circular to 53mm; 10 distinct but petite marginal teeth, widest at 7th or 8th
- Claws: very large and rounded with black tips
- Walking legs: hairy
- Color: brownish red

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Less Common Crabs

Species most likely to be encountered: **M** *As molts* **C** *In coastal estuaries* **I** *At inland sites*

Hairy Helmet Crab – TECH

Telmessus cheiragonus

- Carapace: diamond to 100mm; 6 prominent marginal teeth widest at the 5th; hairy
- Claws: small, similar to walking legs; hairy
- Walking legs: long and hairy
- Color: olive green to yellow; orange-brown hairs

Spider Crabs – SPID

Multiple species of the family Majidae:
(e.g., *Pugettia producta, P. gracilis, Scyra acutifrons)*

- Carapace: longer front-back than wide with rostrum protruding far beyond eyes
- Claws: long and thin
- Walking legs: long with sharp tips
- Color: variable, dark green to reddish brown; "kelp colored"

Hairy Hermit Crab – PAHI

Pagurus hirsutiusculus

- Often in very small shells, and may abandon shell when disturbed
- White bands on walking legs; most consistent on 2nd to last segment Banded antennae
- Typically hairs cover legs

Grainy Hermit Crab – PAGR

Pagurus granosimanus

- Often inhabits very large shells and can retract fully, but will not abandon shell when disturbed
- White to blue tubercules on claws and legs, giving a "grainy" appearance
- Orange, unbanded antennae

Black-clawed Crab – LOBE

M

Lophopanopeus bellus

- Carapace to 40mm; pentagonal with 3 indistinct marginal teeth
- Large, black-tipped claws
- Hairs on walking legs
- Greyish-purple with white and brown

Pea Crab – PEAS

M

Multiple species of the family Pinnotheridae

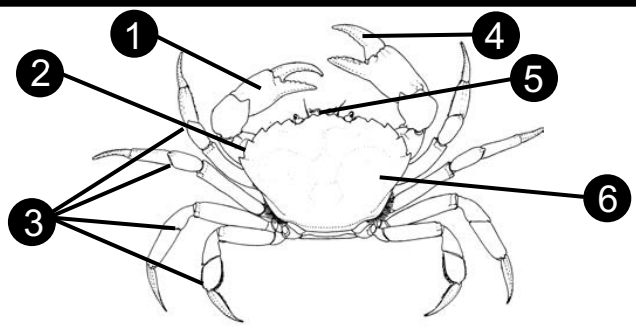
- Carapace to 11mm; oblong oval; smooth with no marginal teeth; no rostrum
- Claws small and indistinct
- Color variable, generally pale

Porcelain Crab – PORC

M

Multiple species of the family Porcellanidae

- Carapace to 19mm; circular; no marginal teeth
- Dorso-ventrally flattened
- 3 pairs of walking legs
- Flattened claws
- Long antennae



1. Claw/Cheliped
2. Marginal teeth/lateral spines
3. Walking legs
4. Dactyl
5. Rostrum
6. Carapace

Gastropods & Shrimps

Species most likely to be encountered: **M** *As molts* **C** *In coastal estuaries* **I** *At inland sites*

Asian Mud Snail – BAAT **I**

Batillaria attramentaria

- Long conical shell to 45mm, but most individuals 20-30mm
- Circular aperture and operculum
- Color dark brown with fine bands, wider bands sometimes also apparent.
- Where present, often found in very high densities

Brokenback Shrimps – BROK

Multiple species of the families Pandalidae and Hippolytidae

- Laterally compressed
- Prominent rostrum
- “broken” back
- Small indistinct claws
- Long walking legs
- Color variable

Nassa Snail – NASS

Nassarius mendicus, N. fraterculus

- Shell oval, football-shaped to 25mm with oval operculum.
- Vertical ribs on shell, and whorls more distinct than BAAT.
- Color variable, light tan, gray, sometimes banded
- Long siphon often extended when crawling

Sand Shrimps – SAND

Multiple species of the family Crangonidae

- Dorso-ventrally compressed
- Indistinct rostrum
- Flattened back
- Small subchelate claws
- Short walking legs
- Color “sandy”

Bubble Shells – BUBB

Multiple species of genus *Haminoea*

- Slug-like body up to 33mm with clear thin shell nearly covered by body
- May contract to a ball when handled
- Color ranges from beige to olive green to black, with fine spots

Burrowing Shrimps – BURR **M**

Multiple species of infraorder Thalassinidea

- Dorso-ventrally compressed
- Large abdomen with broad tail fan
- Hairy walking legs
- Color pale white, pink, or gray

Atlantic Dogwhelk – TROB **C**

Tritia obsoleta

- Football-shaped shell to 30mm
- Rounded spire and oval operculum and aperture
- Shell black and finely beaded when young, but appears gray and smooth when worn/aged

Asian Shrimp – PAMA

Palaemon macrodactylus

- Laterally compressed as BROK
- Very long thin claws, long walking legs
- Prominent rostrum
- 2nd antennae longer than body
- Color translucent or pale brown/gray

Most Common Fishes

Species most likely to be encountered: **M** *As molts* **C** *In coastal estuaries* **I** *At inland sites*

Staghorn Sculpin – LEAR

Leptocottus armatus

- Flattened body; large rounded head
- Large, forked antler-like spines in front of gill covers, may erect when agitated
- Large lobe-shaped pectoral fins with concentric black stripes
- Up to 460mm (~18”)

Prickly Sculpin – COAS

Cottus asper

- Similar large, rounded head and flattened body as LEAR
- Short unbranched spines on gill covers
- Circular pectoral fins with sturdy, stippled rays. Often holds dorsal fin erect
- Up to 300mm (~12”)

Tidepool Sculpin – OLMA

Oligocottus maculosus

- Head more pointed than LEAR, long slender body
- Two white saddle patches (behind gill and in front of tail) typically apparent
- Pectoral fins weaker, triangular compared to LEAR
- Small forked spine on gill cover
- Up to 90mm (~3.5”)

Shiner Perch – CYAG

Cymatogaster aggregata

- Deep-bodied, narrow football shape, similar to a goldfish
- Color silver and greenish-black sides with 3 broad yellow vertical bars
- Up to 203mm (~8”)

Three-spined Stickleback – GAAC

Gasterosteus aculeatus

- Elongate, cigar-shaped body
- Three spines on front of dorsal fin, may be erected if agitated
- Pair of spines in pelvic fins
- Color greenish silver, may be reddish orange
- Up to 75mm (~3’)

Eel-like Fishes – ELFS

Multiple species of Pholidae and Stichaeidae

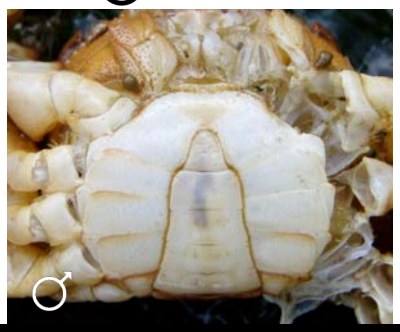
- Very elongated body, appearing like an eel
- Pectoral fins smaller than sculpin, larger than CYAG or GAAC, caudal fin may appear continuous with body
- Colors variable by species with varied spotting and banding patterns
- Up to 200 - 300mm (~8 - 12’) depending on species

Crabdomen Guide

Individual abdomens can vary in shape and color, but this guide covers the typical shape associated with each sex.

Shore Crabs

♀ Female ♂ Male



Purple Shore Crab - HENU (*Hemigrapsus nudus*)
Hairy Shore Crab - HEOR (*Hemigrapsus oregonensis*)

Juvenile female vs. feminized male

Immature ***female***

Prepuberty ***female***

Feminized ***male***

Record these crabs by their *true sex*

Other Crabs

♀ Female ♂ Male ♀ Female ♂ Male

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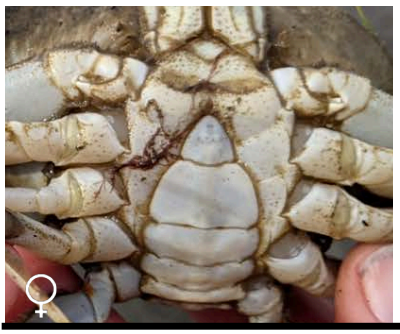
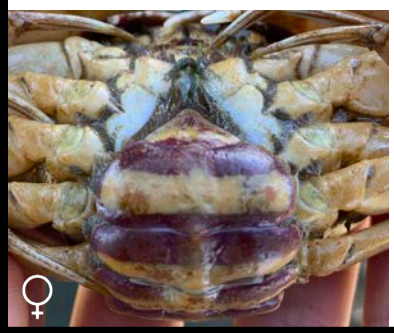
Carcinus maenas

Red Rock Crab - CAPR
Cancer productus

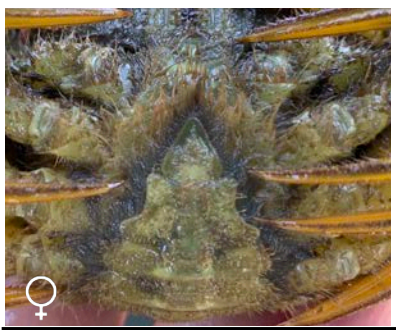
Dungeness Crab - MEMA
Cancer (Metacarcinus) magister



Graceful Crab - MEGR
Cancer (Metacarcinus) gracilis



Hairy Helmet Crab - TECH
Telmessus cheiragonus



Spider Crabs - SPID
Multiple species grouped from the family Majidae