



16 January 2015

MR03-15

New Asian paddle crab find triggers request to fishers

Scientific confirmation this week that a crab, caught recently in Matilda Bay, is an Asian paddle crab (*Charybdis japonica*) has prompted a fresh reminder for fishers to be on the lookout for the pest species.

An alert fisher, who caught the crab in a drop net on the Swan River late last month, helpfully reported his find through [FISHWATCH](#).

Senior Biosecurity Management Officer with the Department of Fisheries, Marion Massam today called on other crab fishers to also continue their vigilance, in the ongoing efforts required to prevent the pest species from establishing itself in WA.

“Their assistance is crucial – the three paddle crabs previously detected at Mosman Bay in 2012 were all caught by recreational fishers,” Ms Massam said.

“This particular Asian paddle crab was light tan, but we know the species varies greatly in colour – its definitive features are the sharp spines between the eyes and the six spines down each side, as identified in the department’s pest alert, which is available at www.fish.wa.gov.au/biosecurity.

“The [biosecurity alert](#) also shows pictures of native crabs (particularly the small four-lobed swimming crab) that have sometimes been confused with the Asian paddle crab.

“The native small, brownish swimming crab has no spines between the eyes – take a close look. If there are no spines then it’s the native crab.”

In general, fishers should first look at any small crabs with a shell width up to 120 mm that look different to blue swimmers and then check for the spines between the eyes. Ms Massam said people should not eat the pest crab, because the species can carry a disease that could cause poisoning in humans.

“We need to make sure the Asian paddle crab doesn’t establish in Western Australia, as it could out-compete native species like the blue swimmer, could spread diseases to other crabs and prawns and would probably be impossible to eradicate,” she said.

“Crab fishers are urged to check their catches and, if in doubt; take photographs, retain suspect crabs, note the fishing location and contact **FISHWATCH** on **1800 815 507**.”

Aquatic pests and diseases are a significant threat to WA’s precious oceans and rivers. The Department of Fisheries is leading the effort to prevent them arriving and establishing themselves in our waters.

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AQUATIC BIOSECURITY PEST ALERT

Asian paddle crab (*Charybdis japonica*)

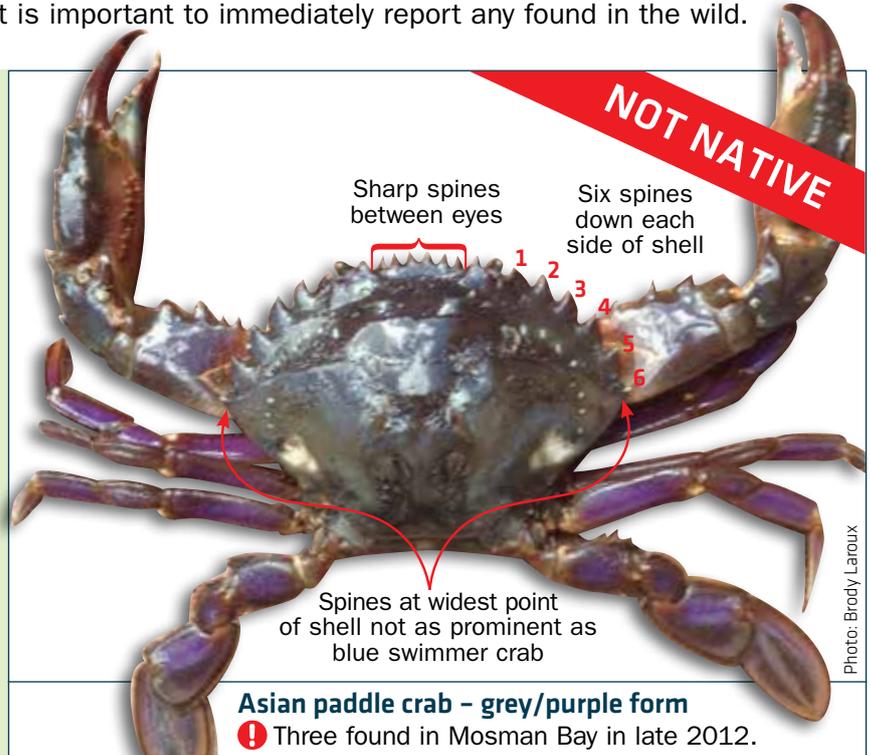
Have you seen this crab?

The Asian paddle crab is an aggressive non-native crab that could spread devastating disease to prawns, crabs and lobsters. It can carry a disease that causes poisoning in humans, and could out-compete native crabs like our iconic blue swimmer. The paddle crab is not currently established in Australia, but has significant potential to do so and to become a major pest, so it is important to immediately report any found in the wild.

Other key points

- Various colours – pale to olive green and brown to purple
- Shell width up to 120 mm (smaller than blue swimmers and most mud crabs)
- Found in marine areas, estuaries and the salty lower reaches of rivers
- May be near pylons, concrete and other disturbed areas

Check carefully – paddle crabs are being mistaken for other species (particularly under-sized mud crabs) and returned to the water.



Asian paddle crab – lighter form
 ⚠ Crab handed in at Mandurah in 2010.



Asian paddle crab – browner form

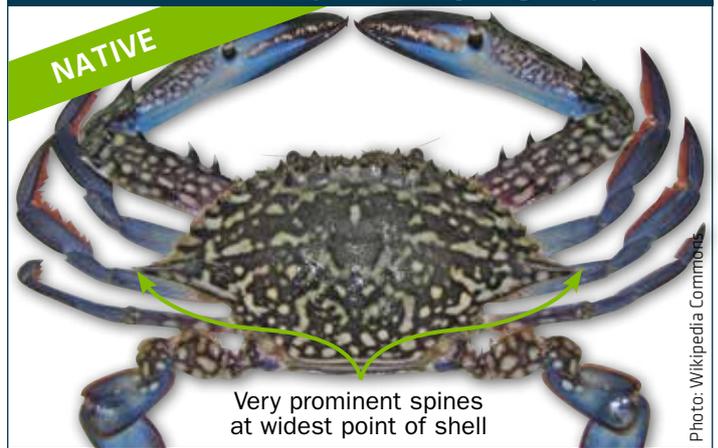
Do not confuse the Asian paddle crab with these native species:

Four-lobed swimming crab (*Thalamita sima*)



- Rusty red to aqua blue or green.
- Shell width up to 60 mm, no size limit. Bag limit applies*.

Blue swimmer crab (*Portunus pelagicus*)



- Males mottled bright blue to purple, females mottled brown
- Shell width up to 210 mm, minimum size limit 127 mm. Bag and boat limits apply*.

Coral crab (*Charybdis feriata*)



- Marbled reddish brown nippers.
- Shell width up to 170 mm, no size limit. Bag limit applies*.

Brown and green mud crabs (*Scylla* species)



- Males have large solid nippers.
- Shell width up to about 145 mm (brown) and 300 mm (green), minimum size limit 120 mm (brown), 150 mm (green). Bag and boat limits apply*.

* For the most up-to-date fishing information contact your local Department of Fisheries office or visit www.fish.wa.gov.au

If you think you have caught or seen an Asian paddle crab:

1. Do not eat it.
2. Examine each crab closely and compare to the photographs on this pest alert. **If in any doubt, please retain the animal.**
3. Make a note of when and where you saw or caught it, including GPS readings (if possible).
4. Take photographs of it from above (like those featured in this leaflet), and also from directly below.
5. **Please keep the crab and contact the FishWatch number 1800 815 507** – you should do this before coming ashore or as soon as possible after, so a Fisheries and Marine Officer can make contact with you and provide further advice.
6. If you keep and report a suspected Asian paddle crab, it will not be included as part of your daily bag limit of crabs.
7. Visit www.fish.wa.gov.au to discover more out about maintaining good vessel hygiene to avoid spreading marine pests.

Further information

biosecurity@fish.wa.gov.au

www.fish.wa.gov.au/biosecurity

www.marinepests.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0017/852110/Charybdis-japonica.pdf

Fish for the future

