

Harris mud crab (*Rhithropanopeus harrisii*)



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Common name(s) in English	Harris mud crab. White-fingered mud crab. Zuiderzee crab.
... and in other languages	Danish: Østamerikansk brakvandskrabbe. Dutch: Zuiderzeekrabbetje. German: Brackwasserkrabbe. Zuidersee-Krabbe. Polish: Krabik amerykański.
Scientific name	<i>Rhithropanopeus harrisii</i>
Organism group	Crustaceans. True crabs.
Size and appearance	This dwarf crab grows to at most about 2 cm wide across its somewhat ridged carapace. Its front is almost straight (no notch in the carapace as in the green shore crab or mitten crab). The claws have white tips, and one claw is always larger than the other. The walking legs, four on each side, are long, slender and somewhat hairy. The crab is brown to olive green.
May be confused with	Young green shore crabs (<i>Carcinus maenas</i>) or Chinese mitten crabs (<i>Eriocheir sinensis</i>).
Geographical origin	East coast of the United States.
First observed in Swedish waters	Has not yet been observed in Swedish waters.
Occurrence in Swedish seas and coastal areas	Has not yet been observed in Swedish waters.
Occurrence in other sea areas	The species has gradually spread to countries on the shores of the North Sea (Britain, France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Denmark, Germany), into the Baltic (Poland, Lithuania, Russia) and into the Black and Caspian Seas (Romania and Bulgaria). In 1996 it was also reported from Italy. The first observation in Europe was in the 1930s in the Dutch Zuiderzee (hence the name Zuiderzee crab).
Probable means of introduction	Shipping, either in ballast water or on ships' hulls in the shelter of fouling organisms.
Habitat(s) in which species occurs	An adult crab can withstand quite wide variations in salinity. <i>Rhithropanopeus harrisii</i> is found chiefly in brackish-water areas, but also in fresh waters. It lives in shallow water on muddy and sandy

	substrata, where it needs some kind of shelter (natural or man-made) on the seabed, e.g. stones, reefs, dense vegetation or marine debris. It cannot reproduce in fresh water, however, as its larvae are unable to survive salinities of less than 2.5 psu. That aside, however, the larvae can cope with quite a wide range of environmental conditions.
Ecological effects	Competition for food and space with other, native crab species, with a risk of natives being displaced. <i>Rhithropanopeus harrisii</i> is a more aggressive and active predator than many other crabs found in the same habitats. It is not known whether it has affected the common mussel (<i>Mytilus edulis</i>) populations of the Baltic Sea area, where crabs are not otherwise present.
Other effects	There are reports of large numbers of crabs of this species clogging water intakes to homes and power stations.

FIND OUT MORE

- North European and Baltic Network on Invasive Alien Species: *Rhithropanopeus harrisii*
<http://www.nobanis.org/speciesInfo.asp?taxaID=966>
- Baltic Sea Alien Species Database: *Rhithropanopeus harrisii*
http://www.ku.lt/nemo/directory_details.php?sp_name=Rhithropanopeus+harrisii
- Alien species in Poland: Mud crab
<http://www.iop.krakow.pl/ias/species.asp?10>
- University of Gdansk, Hel Marine Station: Krabik amerykański
<http://hel.hel.univ.gda.pl/jurek/org/sko/kam/kam.htm>
- Universität Rostock, Institut für Biowissenschaften: *Rhithropanopeus harrisii*
<http://www.biologie.uni-rostock.de/oekologie/balticsea/03%20Animals/08%20Crustacea/Rithropanopeus%20harrisii.htm>
-  8,7 MB: Bundesanstalt für Gewässerkunde: Neozoa (Makrozoobenthos) an der deutschen Nordseeküste: Eine Übersicht.
http://www.stefannehring.de/downloads/083_Nehring+Leuchs-1999_BfG-Bericht-1200_neozoa-nordsee.pdf
- Tromsø Museum: Pictorial guide to the Crustacea Decapoda of the Eastern Atlantic, the Mediterranean Sea and adjacent continental waters: *Rhithropanopeus harrisii*
http://www.imv.uit.no/crustikon/Decapoda/Decapoda2/Species_index/Rhithropanopeus_harrisii.htm
- Joint Nature Conservation Committee: *Rhithropanopeus harrisii*
<http://www.jncc.gov.uk/page-1710>
- European Nature Information System Database (EUNIS): *Rhithropanopeus harrisii*
<http://eunis.eea.eu.int/species-factsheet.jsp?idSpecies=27414&idSpeciesLink=27414>
- De Krabben van Nederland: Zuiderzeekrabbetje (*Rhithropanopeus harrisii*)
<http://www.krabben.net/zuiderzeekrab.html>
-  3,4 MB: Nationaal Natuurhistorisch Museum: Non-indigenous marine and estuarine species in The Netherlands: *Rhithropanopeus harrisii*
<http://www.marbee.fmns.rug.nl/pdf/marbee/2005-Wolf-ZoolMed.pdf>
- Marine and estuarine macroinvertebrates, macroalgae and fish introduced to the Netherlands: *Rhithropanopeus harrisii*
<http://home.hetnet.nl/~faassema/Rhithropanopeusharrisii.html>
- Natuurlijk mooi: *Rhithropanopeus harrisii*
http://www.natuurlijkmooi.net/zeeland/krabben_en_kreeften/rhithropanopeus_harrisii.htm
- Mediterranean Science Commission (CIESM): Exotic Atlas: *Rhithropanopeus harrisii*
<http://www.ciesm.org/atlas/Rhithropanopeusharrisii.html>
- US Geological Survey: NAS Fact sheet: *Rhithropanopeus harrisii*
<http://nas.er.usgs.gov/queries/FactSheet.asp?speciesID=197>
- Elkhorn Slough Research: Least wanted aquatic invaders: Harris Mud crab
<http://www.elkhornslough.org/research/aquaticinvaders/aquatic10.htm>
- State of California: Central Valley Bay-Delta Branch: Chinese Mitten Crab page (comparisons)
<http://www.delta.dfg.ca.gov/mittencrab/identification.asp>
- Tarleton State University: Occurrence of the Estuarine Mud Crab, *Rhithropanopeus harrisii*, in Texas Reservoirs (research: Donald E. Keith)
<http://www.tarleton.edu/~biology/MudCrab.html>

PHOTO CREDIT

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