



Report this pest



Asian paddle crab

Why is it a pest?

The Asian paddle crab is an aggressive predator that competes with native crabs for space and food.

They prey on a wide range of native species, including shellfish, fish, other crustaceans and invertebrates, posing a significant threat to local marine ecosystems.

These crabs reproduce rapidly, with females producing up to 85,000 eggs multiple times a year. The larvae can survive in varying water temperatures and salt levels, allowing them to spread over large distances via tides and currents.



What does it look like?

- **Size:** Adults have an upper shell that can grow up to 12 centimetres across.
- **Appearance:** They have paddle-like hind legs and six distinct spines on each side of the shell below the eyes. Each claw features five prominent spines on its upper surface. Their colour ranges from pale green or olive green to deep chestnut brown with purplish markings.
- **Distinctive features:** The upper shell is often covered in small hairs, though these may not always be visible.
- **Similar species:** They can be distinguished from other crab species by six pointed spines on either side of their upper shell and by black-tipped claws with five spines on the upper surface.
- **Habitat:** In Aotearoa New Zealand, Asian paddle crabs are typically found in estuaries with firm sand; muddy fine sand; or muddy, shelly fine sand. In their native range in Southeast Asia, they inhabit inter-tidal and sub-tidal zones down to about 15 metres, including sandy, muddy, or rocky reefs.

Common name:

Asian paddle crab

Scientific name:

Charybdis japonica

Management programme:

Unwanted organism

An unwanted organism is not managed under the ORC Pest Plan but may be controlled as part of our Biosecurity Strategy.



**Report
this pest!**

If you have seen or suspect the presence of this pest, you **must report** the sighting to us at orc.govt.nz/reportpests

When can I spot it best?

Late spring to early autumn
(October to March).

This period aligns with the warmer months when crabs are most active, feeding, and reproducing. Juveniles and adults are more mobile and visible in these months.

What are the rules?

It is an offence to breed, knowingly communicate, exhibit, multiply, propagate, release, or sell, an unwanted organism (Biosecurity Act 1993).

What should I do?

ORC is currently developing a marine biosecurity programme and needs to obtain more information on species distributions before pursuing management options. If you think you have spotted Asian paddle crab, please report it.

Preventing the spread of Asian paddle crab is the best strategy, as removal of invasive marine pests is both difficult and expensive.

Cleaning your craft and gear for biosecurity purposes is an important way to help protect the marine environment. Just as regular maintenance keeps your equipment in good condition, biosecurity cleaning keeps the ocean healthy for everyone.

The three main types of marine biosecurity cleaning for boaties are:

For all boats

- Check and clean your gear and anchor, and remove any on-board water before moving to another waterbody.

For trailer boats

- Clean your boat thoroughly when you get home.

For moored boats

- Regularly clean off slime and maintain your antifouling.



Report this pest



Help us find Asian paddle crab

You must notify Otago Regional Council if you suspect the presence of this pest.

If you think you've seen it:



Note the location



Take a photo
(if possible)



Report this pest
at orc.govt.nz/reportpests



For more information, visit orc.govt.nz/asianpaddlecrab