

GUIDE TO MARINE INVADERS IN THE GULF OF MAINE

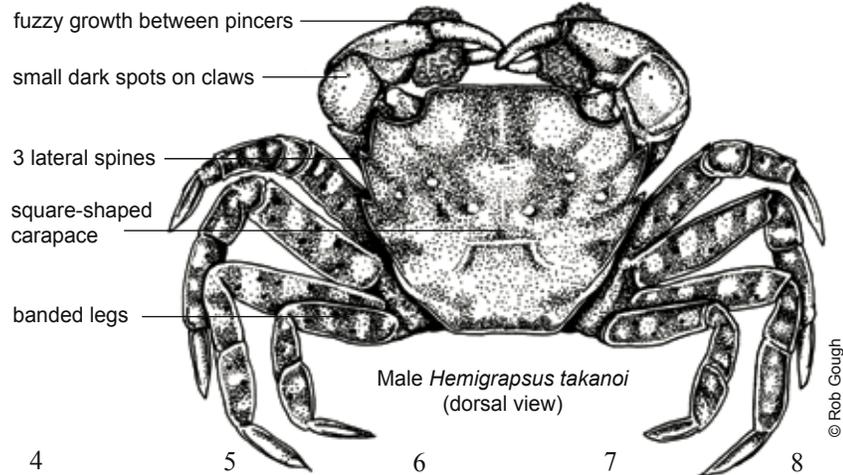
Hemigrapsus takanoi brush-clawed shore crab

Potential
Invader



PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

- 3 lateral spines on each side of a square-shaped carapace (shell)
- Light and dark banded legs with small, dark spots on the claws
- Light brown to yellow, fuzzy growth (setal patch) at base of pincers on males' claws (chelae)
- Color variable: commonly orange-brown, also green and maroon
- Carapace width up to 1 in (2.5 cm)



HABITAT PREFERENCE

- Occurs primarily in mid to low intertidal zone and occasionally in the subtidal zone
- Typically found among rocks and cobbles but may also be found in soft sediments

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INVASION STATUS & ECOLOGICAL CONCERNS

Found in rocky intertidal habitats, *Hemigrapsus takanoi* is a native of the western Pacific Ocean, ranging from Northern Japan to China. Its invasion in Europe was first documented in 1993, and now includes France, Spain, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Germany. In some areas, it has been found in densities as high as 20 individuals/m². It has most likely been transported by ballast water. Scientists have identified this crab species as a likely candidate to invade North American waters.

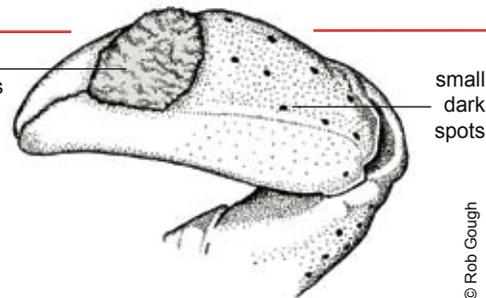
This species, like its close relative *Hemigrapsus sanguineus*, can produce up to 50,000 eggs three to four times during the spawning season, compared to our region's native crabs that reproduce twice each year. The larvae are free-floating for nearly a month before becoming juvenile crabs, increasing the possibility of being transported to new areas. An opportunistic omnivore, it feeds on algae, invertebrates, and larval and juvenile fishes throughout the rocky shore.

SIMILAR SPECIES

Hemigrapsus sanguineus

Hemigrapsus takanoi is most likely to be mistaken for *Hemigrapsus sanguineus*, another invader. Although nearly identical in appearance, *H. takanoi* has small dark spots on its claws (vs. larger, red spots on *H. sanguineus* claws), and males have a tuft of fuzz on each claw at the base of their pincers (see figure at right). *H. takanoi* also tends to be smaller than *H. sanguineus*, typically only growing to half the size of its larger relative. The *Hemigrapsus* genus can be distinguished from other crabs throughout our region by its characteristic three lateral spines on each side of a squared carapace (see carapace comparison diagram on *H. sanguineus* card).

light brown/yellow tuft of fuzz
(setal patch) at base of pincers



small
dark
spots

Male *Hemigrapsus takanoi* claw
(frontal view)

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This identification card is one of a series produced by Salem Sound Coastwatch (www.salemsound.org) highlighting introduced species that pose a threat to the marine environments of Massachusetts and the Gulf of Maine. The original development of these cards was funded by the MA EOEPA Office of Coastal Zone Management with funding from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. For additional species information or to report sightings, please visit www.mass.gov/czm/invasives/monitor/reporting.htm.

