



ENVIRONMENT
DAY 2026







CHINESE MITTEN CRAB

Dr Paul Clark

Senior Researcher
Natural History Museum

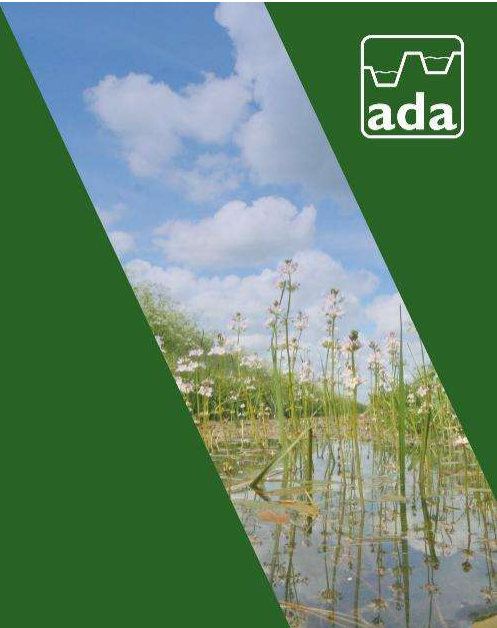
SPONSORED BY

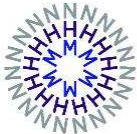




WIFI: MSS-Internet

Password: AccessGranted

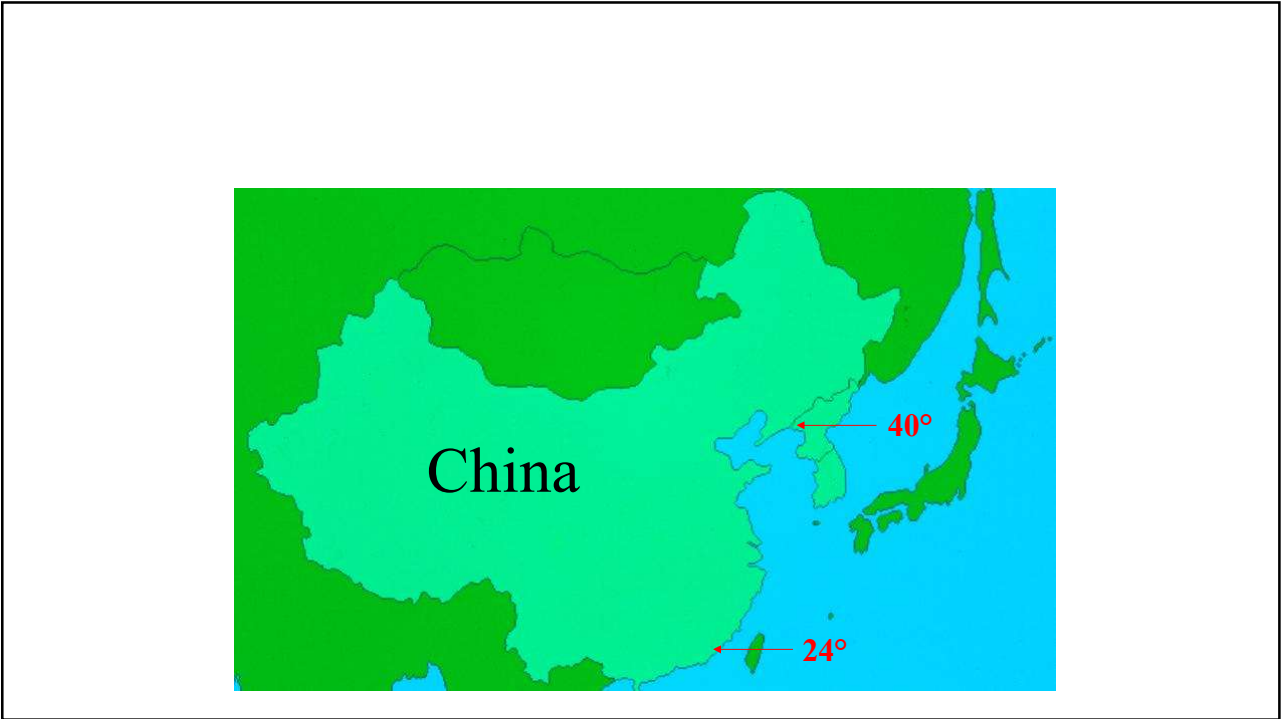




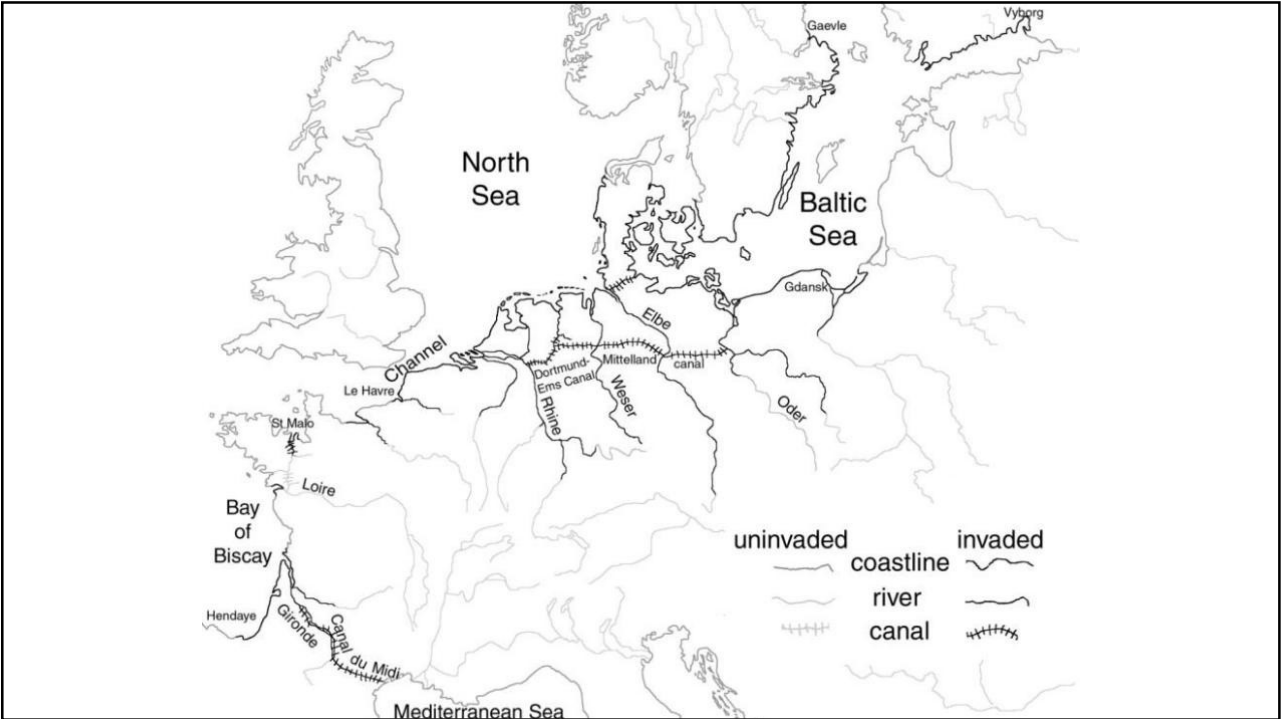
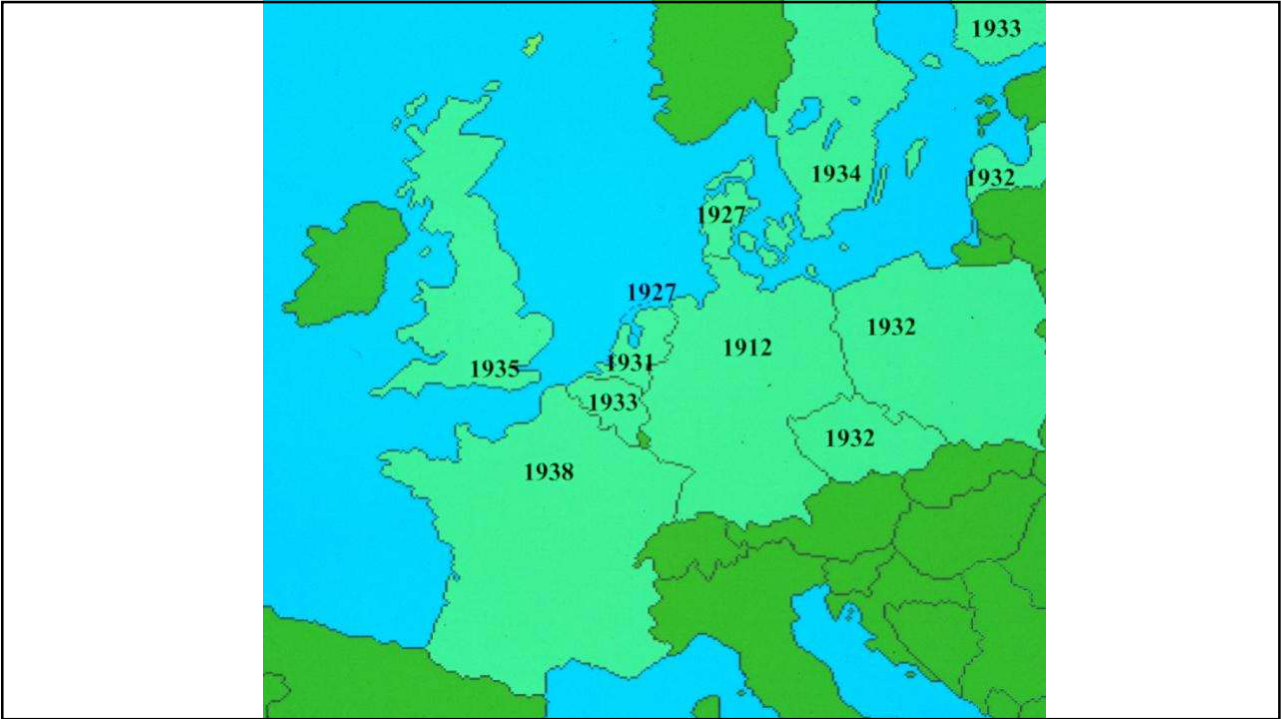
Natural
History
Museum

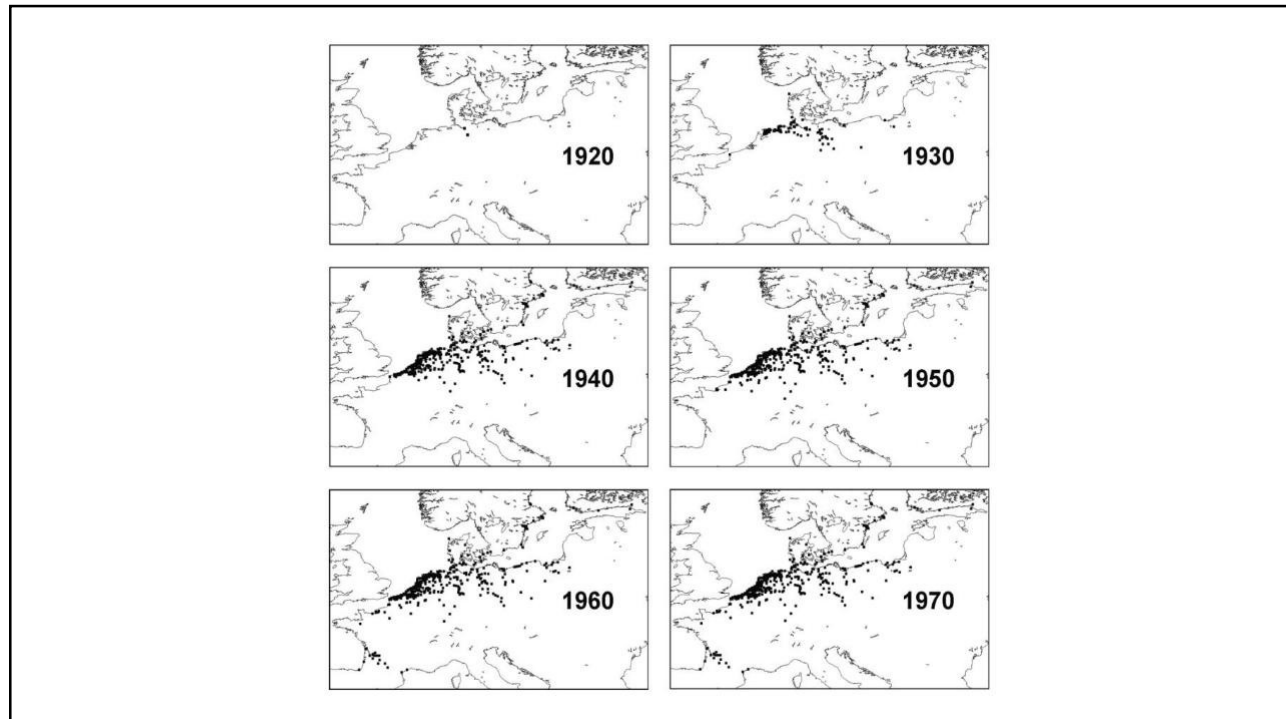
Eriocheir sinensis,
the Chinese mitten crab:
coming soon to a habitat near you

by Paul Clark









Problems in Europe in the 1930s and since then

Attempts to remove
mitten crabs have
been ineffective.

220 tonnes were
removed from the
River Weser in 1936
alone.

Subsequent attempts
were abandoned.



(Photo courtesy of Stephan Gollasch)

Eriocheir sinensis

One of the top 100 invasives
worldwide

Ballast water discharge



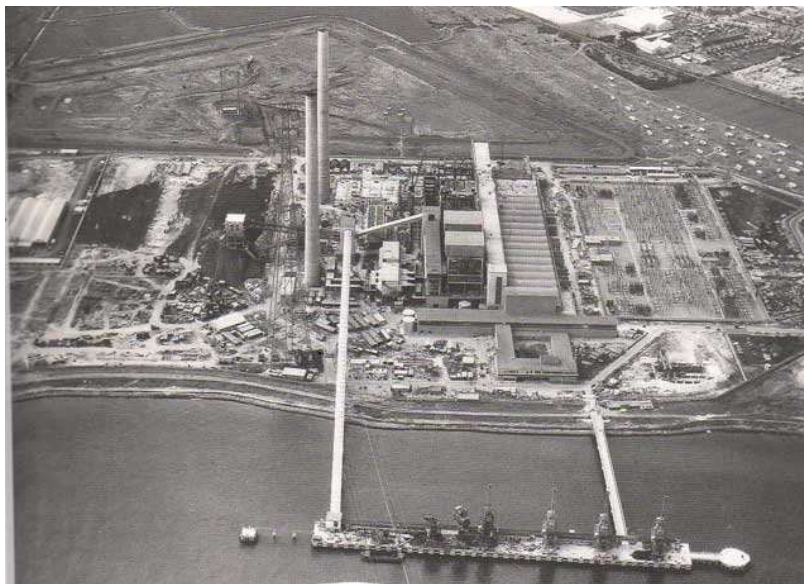
Courtesy Sephan Gollasch

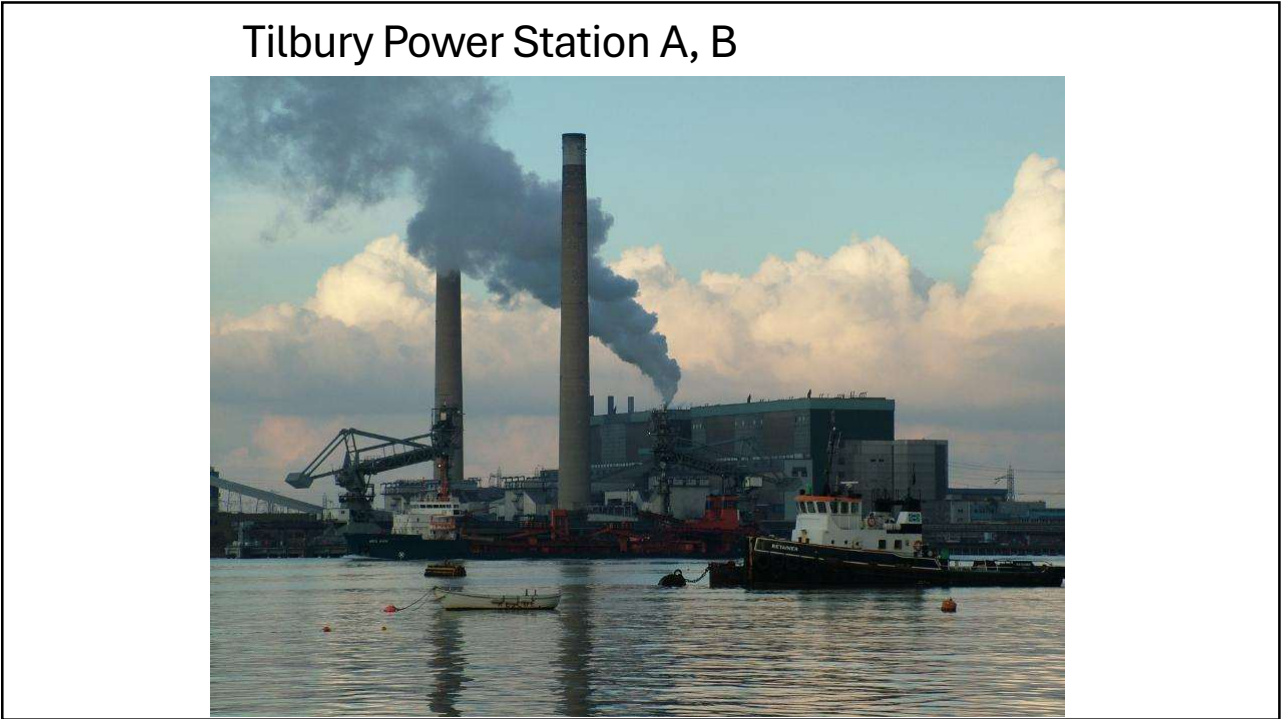
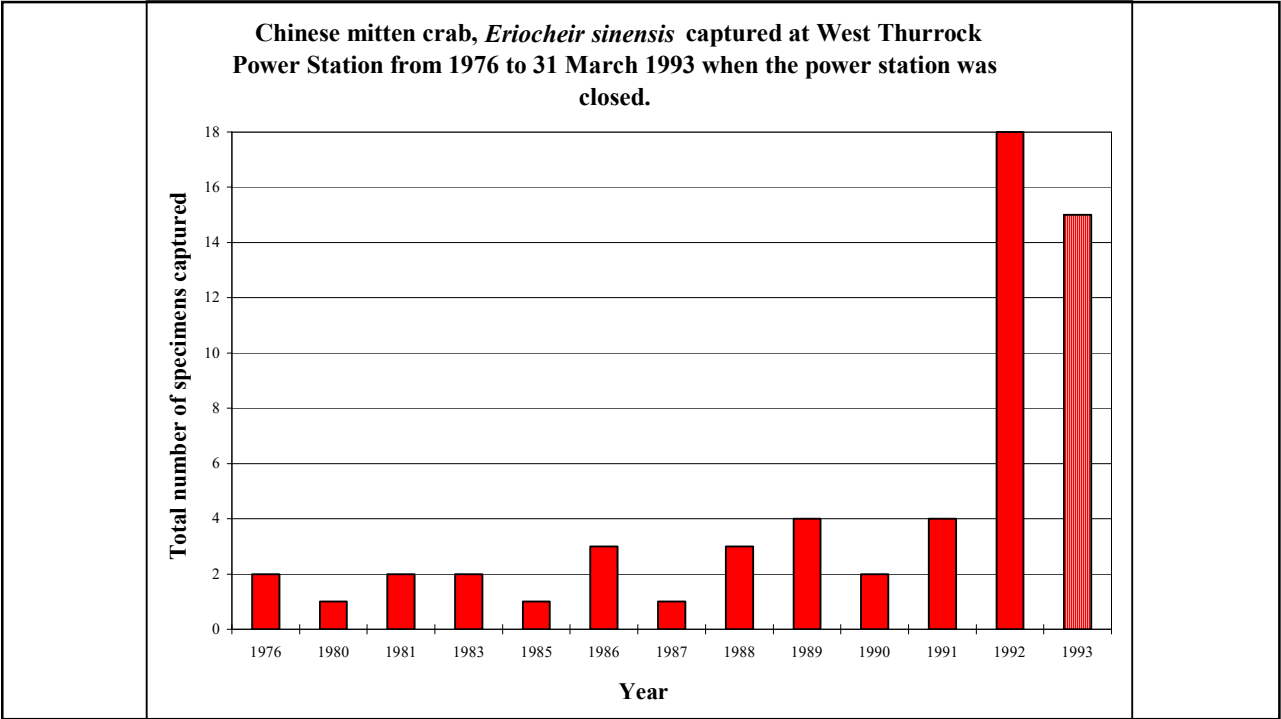


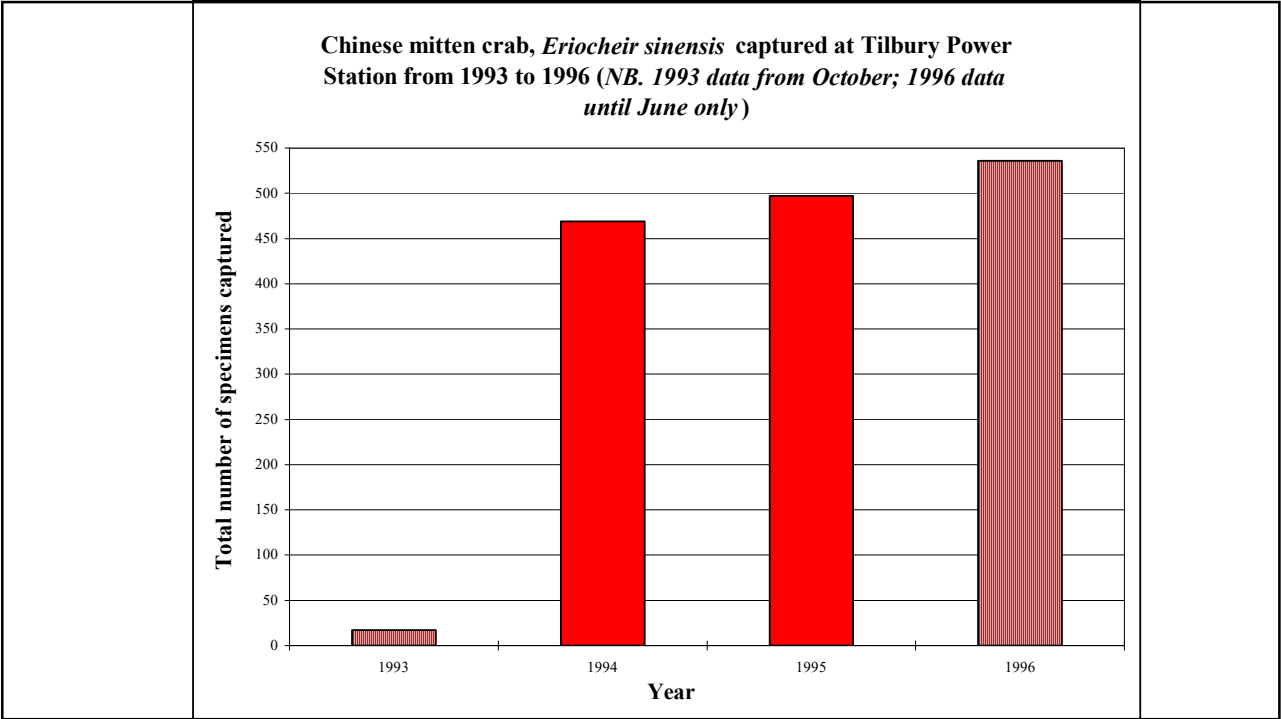
Lots Road Power Station, Chelsea



West Thurrock Power Station







Recording Chinese mitten crabs

Report your sightings by email or phone

North England
Tel: 0191 222 5345
email: mittens@ncl.ac.uk

Wales
Tel: 0845 1306 229
email: enquiries@ccw.gov.uk

South west England
Tel: 01752 633291
email: recording@mba.ac.uk

South east England
Tel: 020 7942 6170
email: mittens@nhm.ac.uk

Please tell us **where** and **when** you saw a Chinese mitten crab, your **contact details** and, if possible:

- was it male or female?
- take a photograph:
 - take photo from above
 - use a 50p coin to show scale
 - try to show claws clearly


MALE ♀

FEMALE ♀

You can also report sightings by text or picture message to 07806 938789 or online at www.mittencrabs.org.uk



Ordnance Survey
© Crown copyright 1999

Have you seen a Chinese mitten crab?



Chinese mitten crab
(*Eriocheir sinensis*)

- Grey-green to dark brown crab
- Long walking legs
- Squarish body up to 86 mm across
- Dense brown 'fur' on the white-tipped claws
- Habitat: rivers, brackish water estuaries, rarely along the marine inshore coast
- 4+4+4 pattern of teeth around front of shell
- Juveniles may lack 'fur' on claws




Not to be confused with:



Common shore crab
(*Carcinus maenas*)


- Lacks 'fur' on claws
- Shell shape more triangular
- Found on the sea shore and in estuaries but never in freshwater rivers

The broad-clawed porcelain crab
(*Porcellana platycheles*)

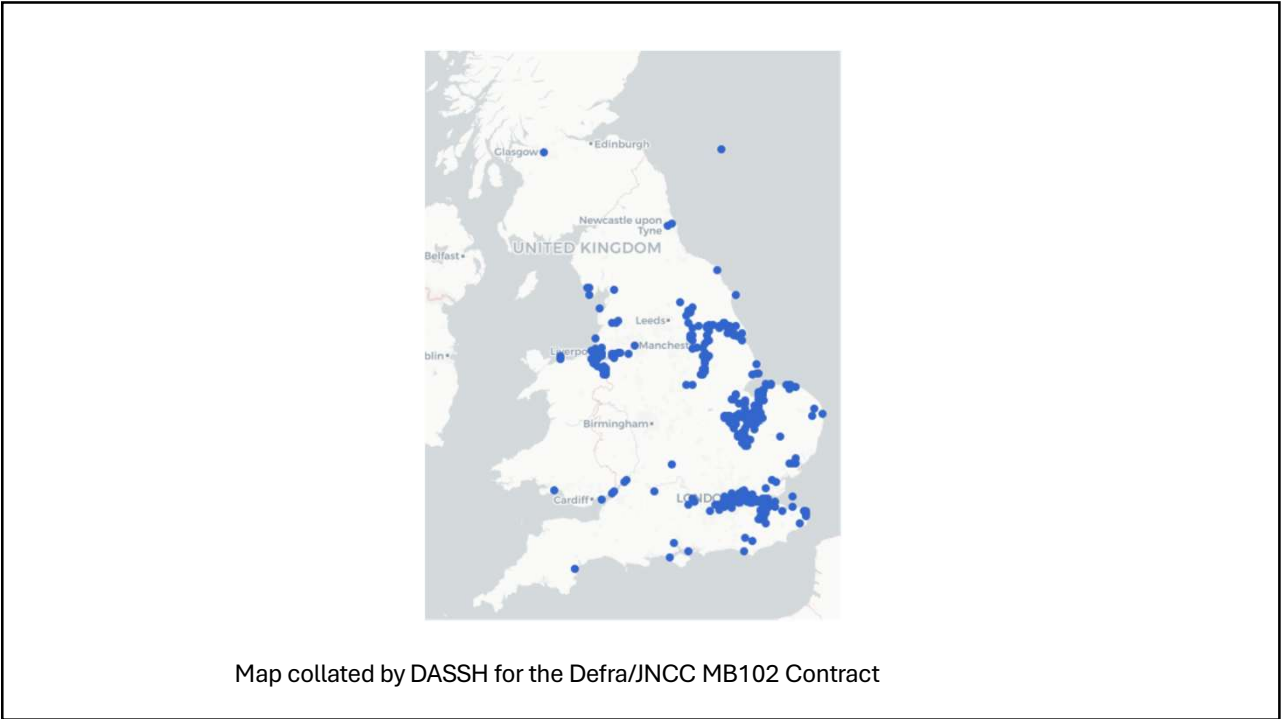


- 2 long antennae
- Only 3 pairs of walking legs apparent
- Found on the sea shore but never in freshwater rivers

Powerful claws



Handle with care



Life cycle

catadromous

- spending most of their life in fresh water
- but must return to the higher salinity waters to breed
- migrate downstream during the Autumn

***Eriocheir sinensis* migration distances**

- Yangtze Kiang, China – 1300km

***Eriocheir sinensis* migration distances**

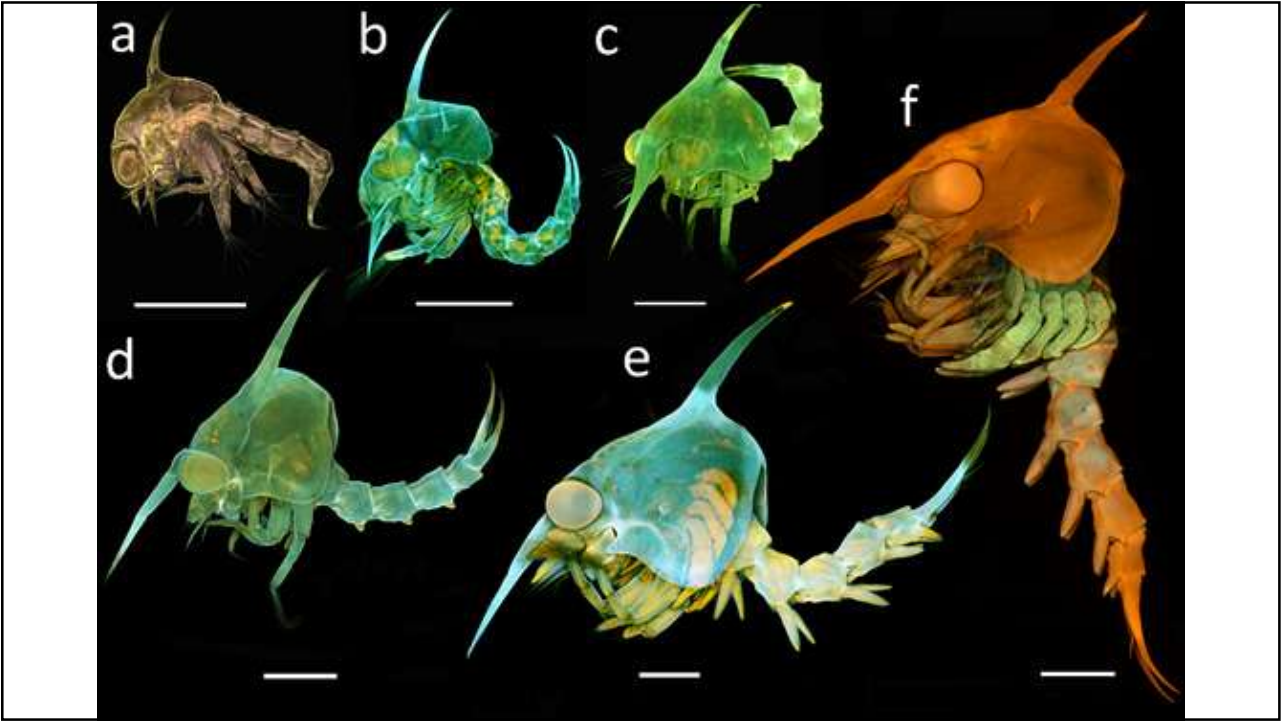
- Yangtze Kiang, China – 1300km
- River Elbe, Prague, Czech Republic – 750km

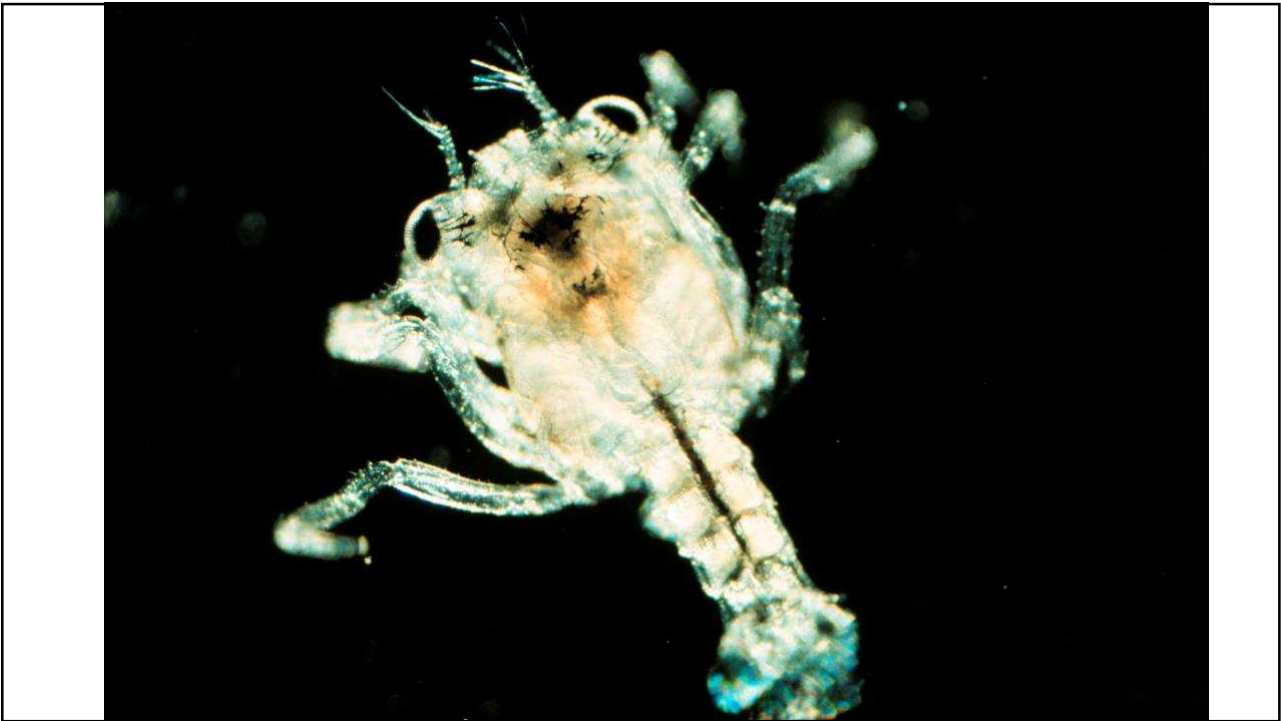
breeding cycle

Females can produce several broods during
the breeding season

Adult mitten crabs die at the end of the
breeding season

e.g., **semelparous**







Great crested grebe - London Wetland Centre
photo by Laurence Arnold

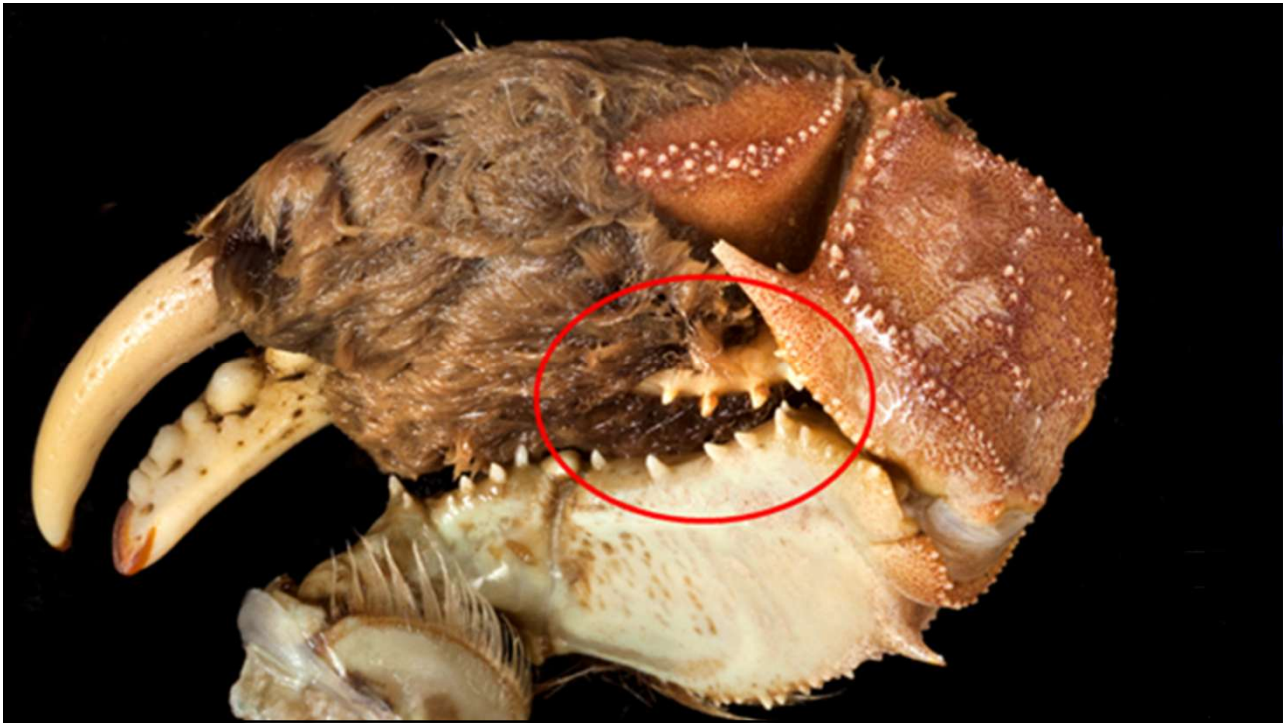


Chiswick Eyot



Eriocheir sinensis

Biological invasions are one of the
top five drivers of global biodiversity
decline (Díaz et al. 2019)





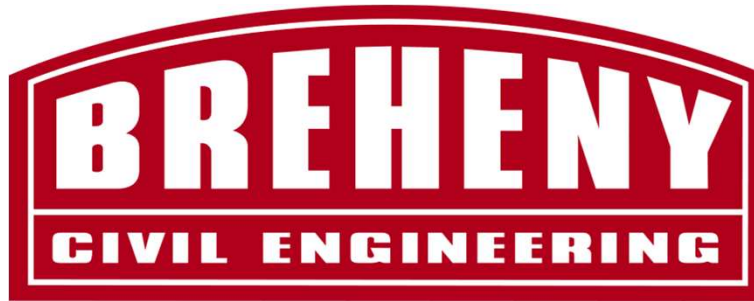












Acknowledgements

Dave Morritt, Royal Holloway London University
Welland and Deepings Internal Drainage Board
Mick Henfrey, Welland and Deepings Internal Drainage Board
Oscar Jones, Aberystwyth University
Joe Pecorelli, Zoological Society of London
John Oliver, Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust

Funders and supporters

