

ENVIRONMENT
DAY 2026



CHINESE MITTEN CRAB
Dr Paul Clark
Senior Researcher
Natural History Museum

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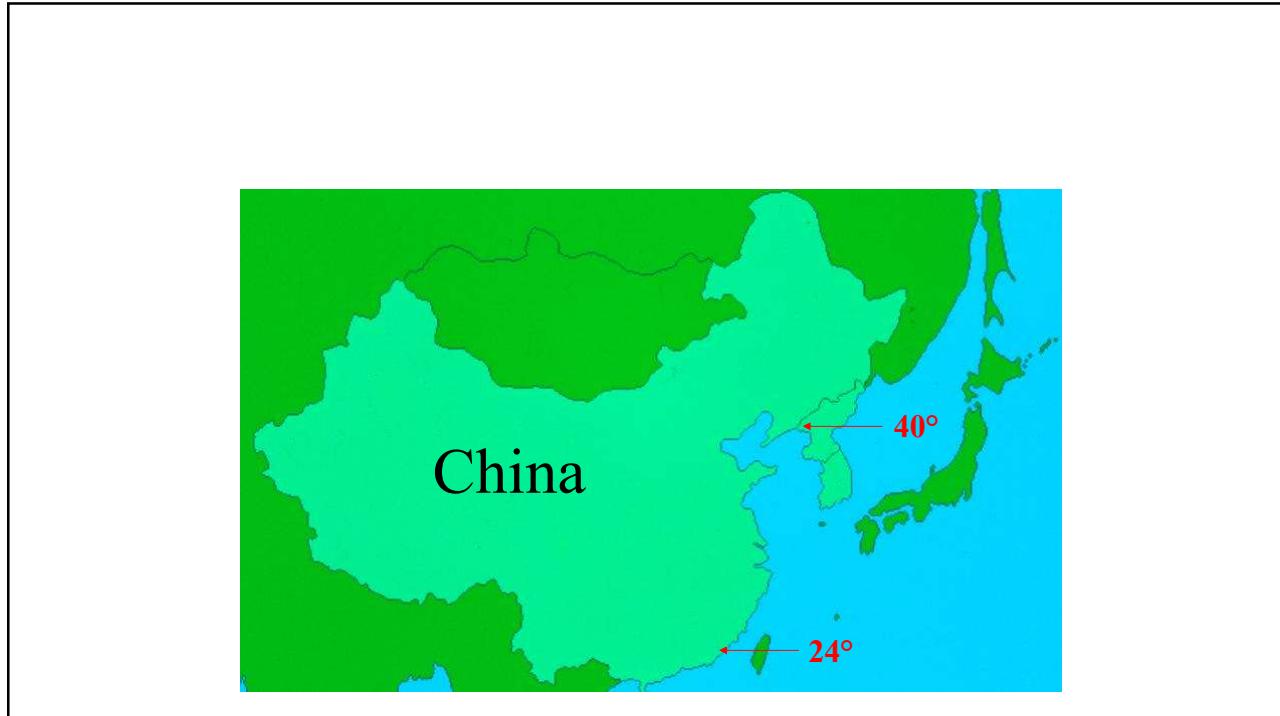


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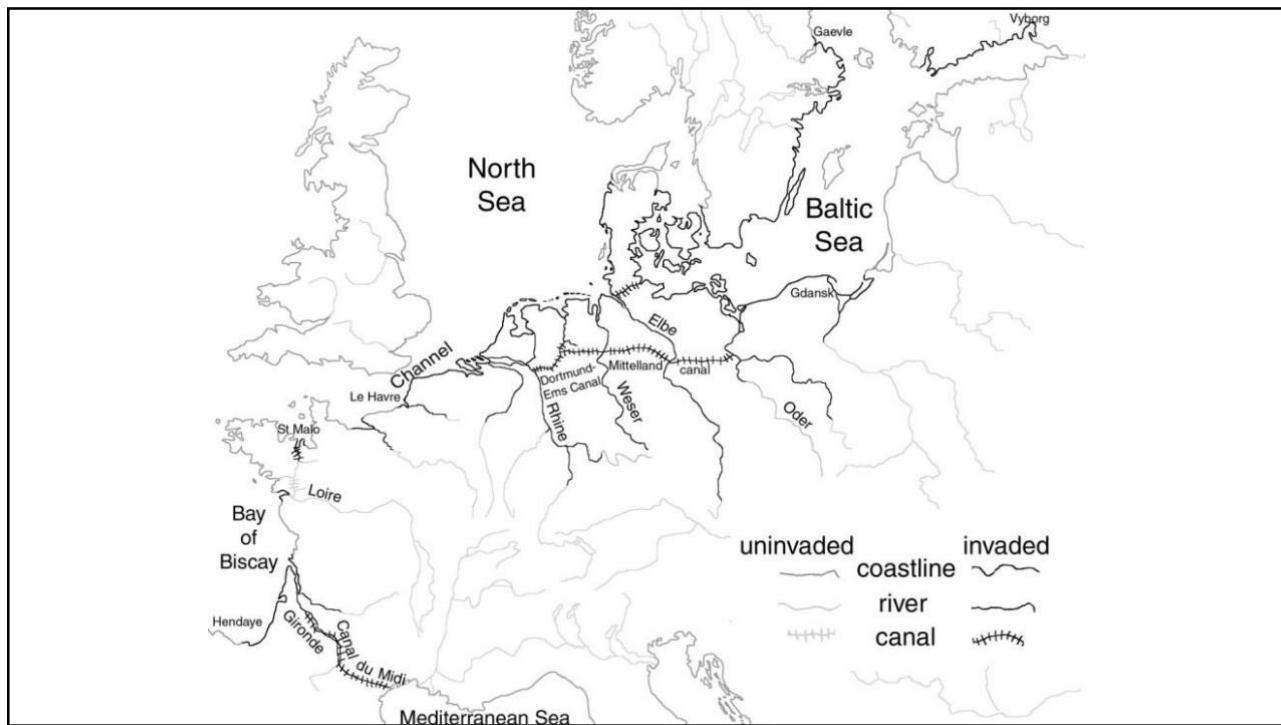
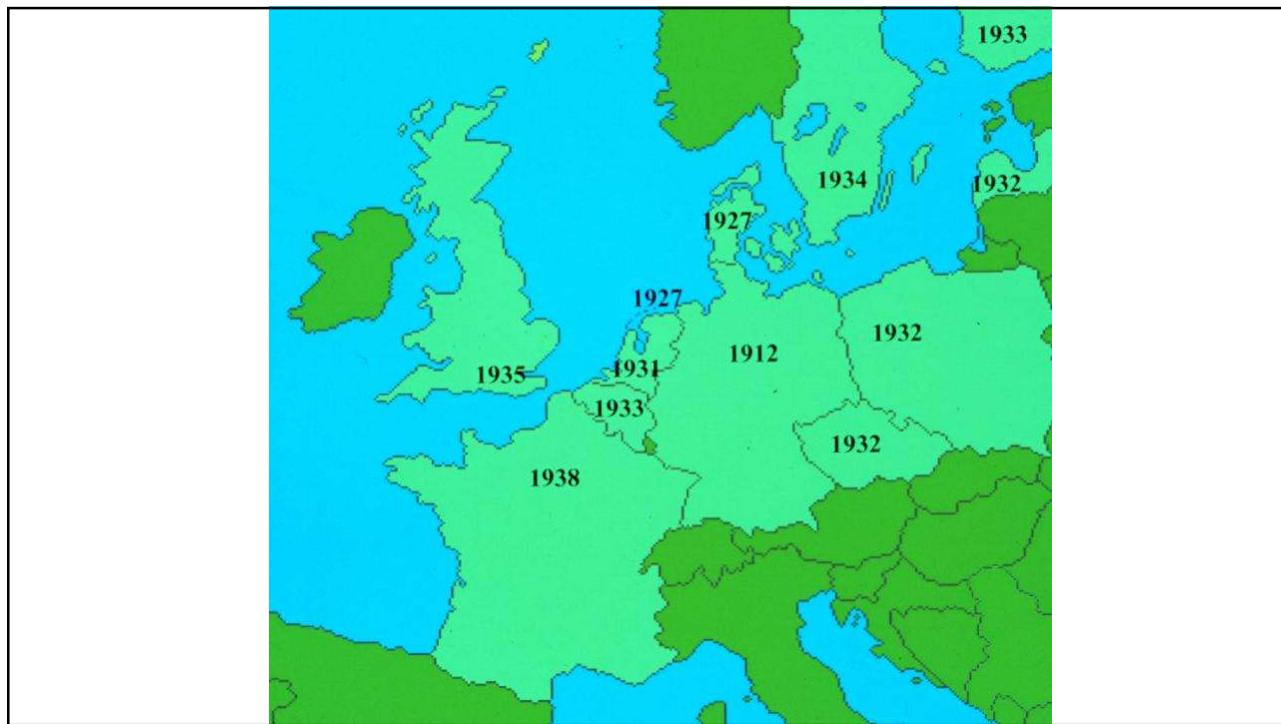


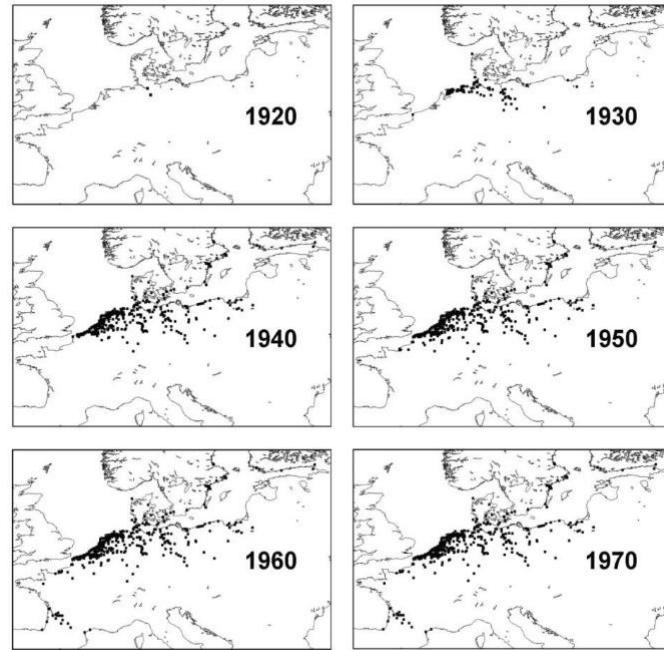
Eriocheir sinensis,
the Chinese mitten crab:
coming soon to a habitat near you

by Paul Clark









Problems in Europe in the 1930s and since then

Attempts to remove
mittens 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 Stephan Gollasch



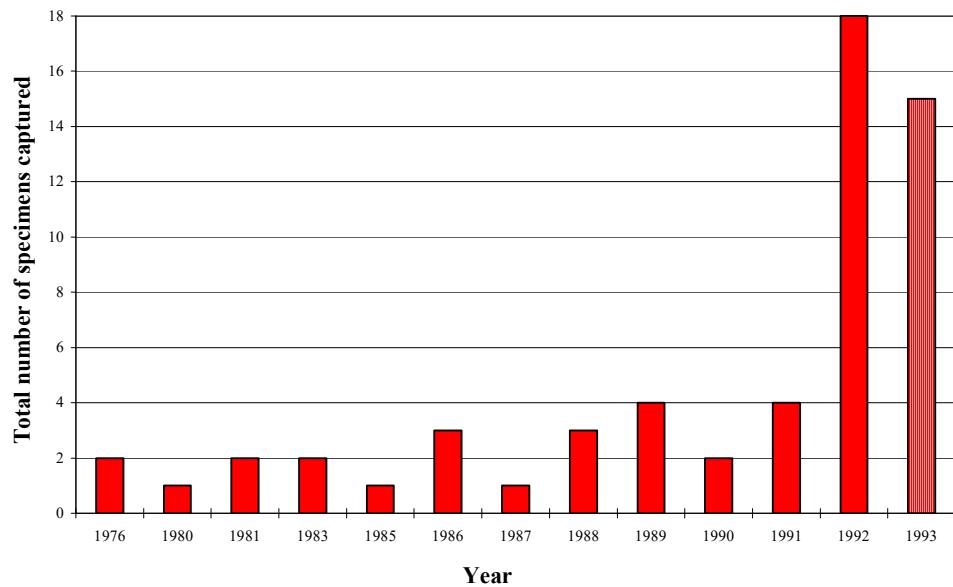
Lots Road Power Station, Chelsea



West Thurrock Power Station

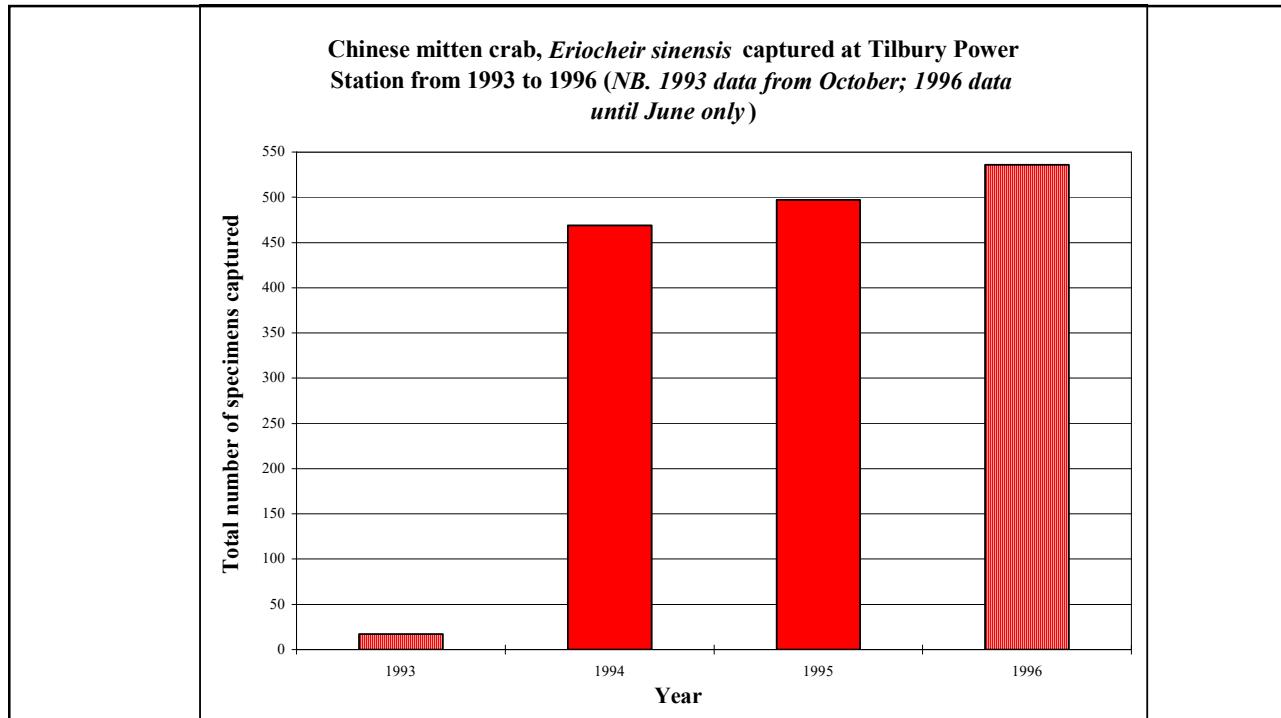


Chinese mitten crab, *Eriocheir sinensis* captured at West Thurrock Power Station from 1976 to 31 March 1993 when the power station was closed.



Tilbury Power Station A, B





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

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

OS Ordnance Survey
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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

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

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 (<i>Carcinus maenas</i>)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Lacks 'fur' on clawsShell shape more triangularFound on the sea shore and in estuaries but never in freshwater rivers	 The broad-clawed porcelain crab (<i>Porcellana platycheles</i>)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">2 long antennaeOnly 3 pairs of walking legs apparentFound on the sea shore but never in freshwater rivers
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Powerful claws



Handle with care



Map collated by DASSH for the Defra/JNCC MB102 Contract

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

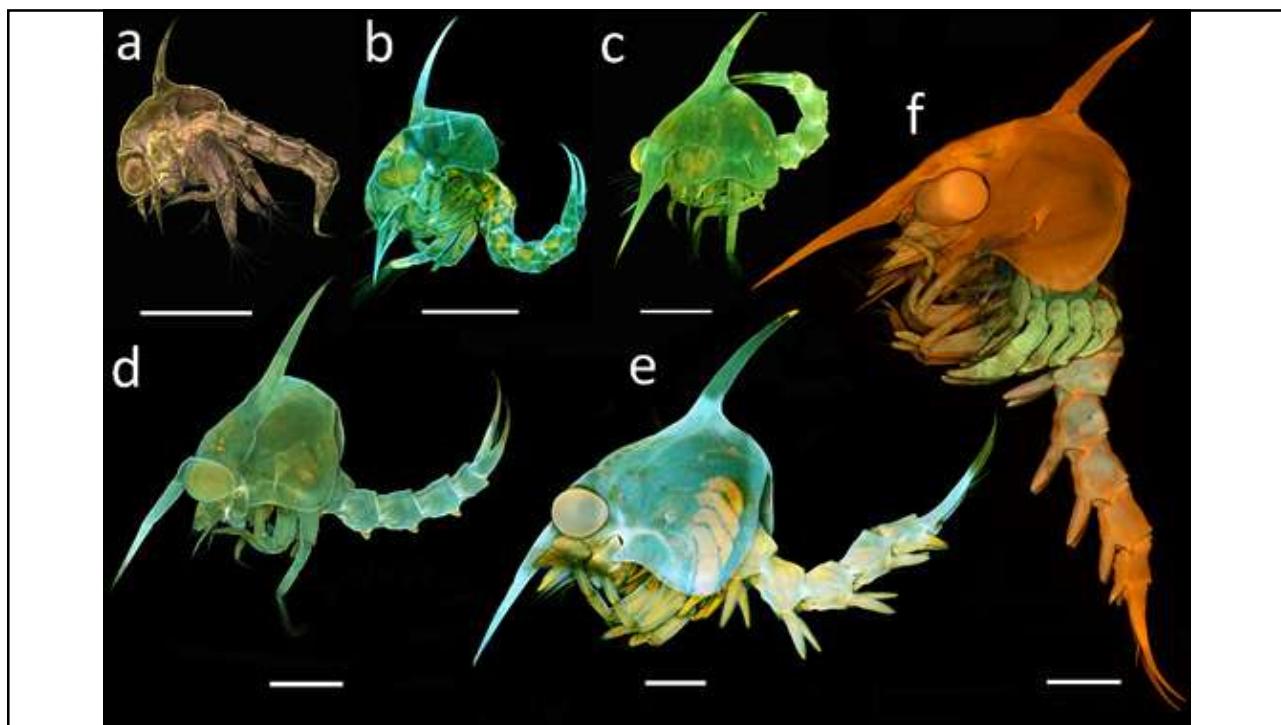
***Eriocheir sinensis* migration distances**

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

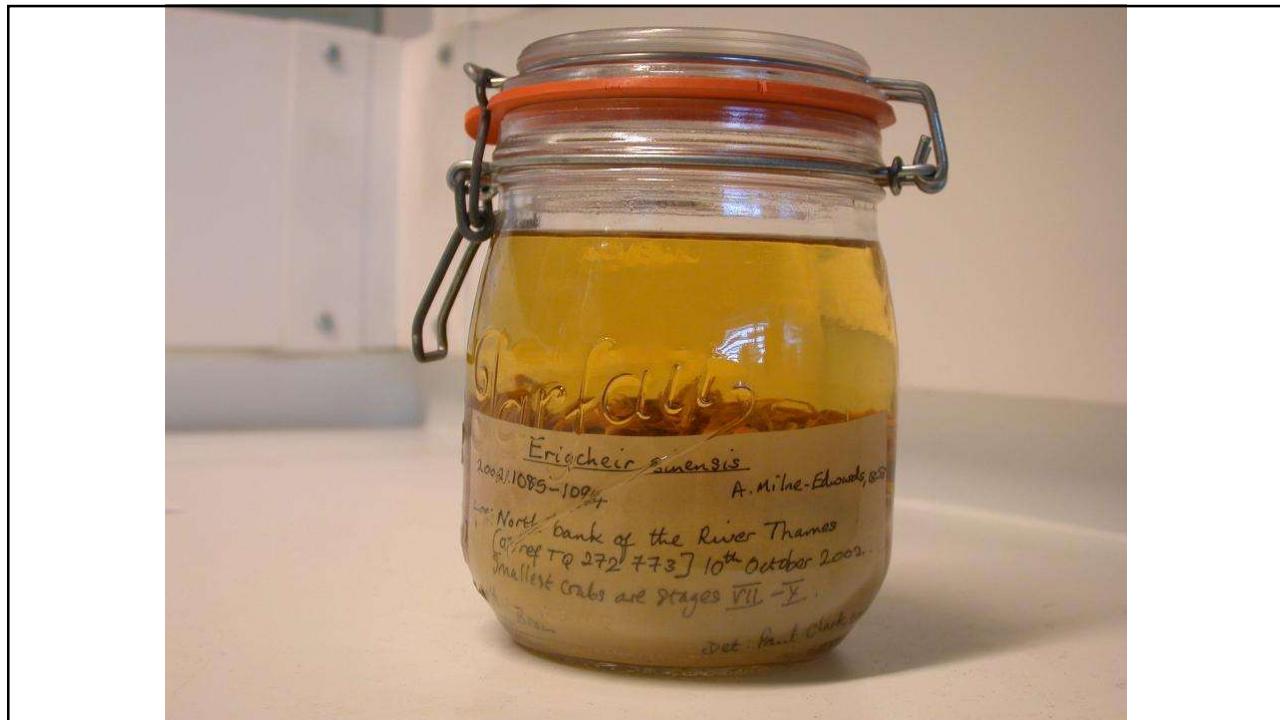
breeding cycle

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

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Funders and supporters



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