



This symbol, shown in black and white at the left, can be seen in its real dark green and gold colours at the junction of many forest roads and public highways across the Island. It marks properties that are part of the Provincial Forest and is a welcome symbol to encourage greater public visitation and awareness of this resource which is owned by all Islanders.

GREEN CRAB, TAKES UP RESIDENCE IN P.E.I. WATERS:

by Jim Jenkins

Man has, throughout the centuries, traveled the world searching for new riches, adventure or civilizations. During these escapades he has intentionally or unintentionally relocated species from their natural habitat to new environs. The starling, for example, was intentionally introduced from Europe into Eastern North America and as we all know has thrived in its new location.

In the 1800's as ships routinely plied the waters between Europe and North America, numerous species were transferred from their native land to the "New World". One such creature was the Green Crab, *Carcinus maenas*, which most likely hitched a ride in the bilge water or on the exterior surface of the wooden ships which quite naturally hosted its own world of sea creatures of algae and other marine growth on the hull of the ship. The green crab found its way to North America in the 1800's and since then has spread out and adapted to the various marine ecosystems found along the East Coast. In the mid-1990's it was discovered on the East Coast of P.E.I. in the Georgetown vicinity. It may have arrived here in ballast water or through its natural cycle of reproduction in the larval stage. However it arrived, experience tells us that it's a creature we will have to adjust to, as it is next to impossible to eradicate.

What then does this new resident look like? It is similar to the rock crab but is smaller in size. According to A.B. Williams (1984), the green crab can vary in colour from dark mottled green with some yellow patches on the dorsal shell, to orange/ dark red on the ventral portion. The last pair of walking legs are flattened, most likely an adaptation for moving in the water column.

The green crab is known to dine on various bivalve molluscs such as mussels and soft-shelled clams and remains of rock crab have been found in its stomach. Around P.E.I., we don't as yet know the full impact of the introduction of this creature. Over the coming years, I am sure we will feel the full effects as the crab extends its range.

During a survey carried out by the Provincial Department of Fisheries, Aquaculture, and Environment, the range had already extended from a localized population to one ranging from North Lake on the north side of P.E.I. to Gascoigne Cove on the south side. Reports have already been received this year that the crab has been verified to be present in St. Peter's Bay and may have been feeding on cultured mussels. If this proves correct, our commercial and cultured shellfish industries will suffer from the impact of this "little beast".

How would a person recognize this crab from the rock crab or the white fingered crab? The colour and size are the first two clues. It is smaller than a rock crab, much larger than a white fingered crab and its colour is a distinctive green (dorsal or back side). Another feature which will quickly "grab" your attention is the aggressive nature of the crab and the speed at which it moves. The green crab is no coward when it is faced with adversity including humans. It will use its pincer claws to deliver a hefty nip. In addition, for those out there who indulge in "crab racing", put your money on the green crab. It is fast. For those fishers unfortunate enough to haul these fellows aboard, they will scurry about the deck at great speed and prove a real challenge to catch by hand.

What is government doing about this matter? Actually, there is probably very little anyone can do, including government. In areas where eradication programs were instituted, they failed. The programs may have slowed the progress of the crab slightly, but not to any measurable degree. Both the Federal and Provincial departments responsible for fisheries have prepared information materials to inform people of