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Science 11 April 1997:

Vol. 276, no. 5310, pp. 203 - 205

DOI: 10.1126/science.276.5310.203a

## RANDOM SAMPLES

**The European Green crab, a voracious and invasive** species that has been worrying West Coast ecologists, has made an appearance in Oregon--the farthest north it has yet been spotted in the West. Last week, an oysterman found a single male crab in an oyster farm in the northern part of Coos Bay. That's a "yellow light" that an invasion may be under way, says biologist Neil Richmond at the Oregon Department of Fish and Game.

The crab has plied the waters off the eastern shores of North America for about 180 years, but didn't make its West Coast debut--in San Francisco Bay--until the late 1980s. Scientists suspect that the crab rode to San Francisco in ballast water or in bait shipments.

Since then, the species has established itself along some 800 kilometers of the California coast, from Monterey Bay to Humboldt Bay. Although ballast water may again be to blame, marine biologist Edwin Grosholz, of the University of New Hampshire, Durham, says it is possible that the crabs' larvae have drifted north and south with ocean currents. The temperature-tolerant arthropod could thrive from Baja California to Alaska, he says.

The green crab eats oysters, clams, and other crab species and has been blamed for destroying the softshell clam fishery off the coast of Maine in the 1950s. Now it's jeopardizing the huge commercial shellfisheries of the Pacific Northwest, says Grosholz. The invader sends ripples up the food chain as well. Grosholz says he and his colleague Greg Ruiz are watching for bird-population declines in crab-invaded areas in California, due to a competition between birds and green crabs for food.

Once the crab gains a clawhold, there are few ways to control it, says marine biologist Andrew Cohen of the San Francisco Estuary Institute. It's too small to catch for food, and any attempts at biological control--such as introducing a parasitic barnacle common in Europe--are risky, Cohen says. Even in Europe, these parasites don't make a big dent in the tough crab's population.

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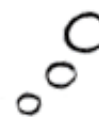
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