



Mitten Crab Network Newsletter (February 2008)

Fifth Mitten Crab in Chesapeake Bay & Third Chinese Mitten Crab in Hudson River

On 13 December 2007, the fifth Chinese Mitten Crab was confirmed in the Chesapeake Bay. A local waterman contacted the Calvert Marine Museum in Calvert County with information on a crab that he had collected in early June 2007. The crab was identified by biologists at the museum and pictures were sent as confirmation. The crab, a female, was estimated to measure about 60mm based upon photographs and was reported as captured in a crab pot near Cove Point Light, Cove Point, MD. Following capture, we were told the crab was kept alive for two months, after which it was preserved in alcohol and is retained by the waterman.

This is the second female, confirmed in the Chesapeake Bay and the furthest south to date. Cove Point is located at 382310N / 0762255W about the middle of the Chesapeake Bay.

On 11 January 2008, a second juvenile Mitten Crab was collected from the impingement screen at the Danskammer Power Plant in Newburgh, NY. The crab, a male measuring 26mm, was alive and in good condition at the time of collection. The specimen was initially delivered to the New York Department of Environmental Conservation and was then frozen for shipment to the Smithsonian Environmental Research Center.

This is the third Mitten Crab confirmed in the Hudson River and was found approximately 12 miles north of Cold Spring, NY where the first juvenile, a female, was found in October 2007.

In total, thirteen Mitten Crabs have now been confirmed in the Mid-Atlantic region of the United States, occurring from Chesapeake Bay to the Hudson River. All of the crabs were found between 2005-2008. For Chesapeake Bay, one Mitten Crab was caught in each 2005 and 2006, and three crabs were caught in 2007. All Mitten Crabs confirmed in Delaware were caught in 2007. New York has three confirmed Mitten Crabs, all from the Hudson River, two collected in 2007 and the most recent collected in January 2008. It is perhaps noteworthy that the only two juveniles collected to date have come from New York; no other states have reported juveniles at this time.

Additional Mitten Crabs were reportedly captured in Chesapeake Bay and Delaware Bay in 2007. Although these appear to be credible reports, we cannot confirm them, because specimens or photographs were not taken.

We do not yet know whether the Mitten Crabs have established a self-sustaining population in the Mid Atlantic region.

To understand the current distribution and abundance of this crab, we have established a citizen-based network for detecting and reporting Mitten Crabs along the eastern United States. The network is distributed across eastern states and involves citizens, watermen, resource managers, state and federal agencies, and research organizations. The network seeks to document occurrences of the Mitten Crab, providing an organized system for reporting and a source for current information.

Please be on alert for Mitten Crabs in bays and estuaries of the Atlantic coast. To date, people have found crabs in crab pots and washed up on the shore. Identifying photos and materials can be found on the following website: www.serc.si.edu/labs/marine_invasions/.

For anyone finding a Mitten Crab, please:

- do not throw it back alive!
- note the location and date of capture;
- take a photograph and/or retain the crab; and
- contact the Mitten Crab hotline at SERCmittenCrab@si.edu or 443-482-2222.