

Green Crab Trapping 2020

On August 22, 2020 the Arrowsic Shellfish Conservation Committee, friends and neighbors conducted another survey of green crabs in our rivers. During the morning low tide five boats put pogy-baited crab traps down in 12 spots around the island. We used nine traps with a cylindrical shape; the other three traps were modified eel traps with a cuboid shape.

Traps were retrieved after six hours and water samples were taken to check salinity. We counted a total of 938 crabs, 612 were females, 326 males. They were measured, color-graded, and sexed. The carapace of the largest male was 8.6cm wide and the largest female 7cm.

If size is a parameter, green crabs may be finding the best August habitat in the Sasanoa River, which was the only location this year where we used modified eel traps. Especially the trap at Palace Cove had by far the most males with a carapace of ≥ 7 cm and the most females ≥ 6 cm compared to all other locations. Of all crabs trapped, only two appeared to be close to molting, and one female carried eggs. The salinity varied from 8‰ at Preble Point to 30‰ at Squirrel clam flats.

The trap at North Squirrel clam flats had the highest number of green crabs, followed by Fisher Eddy and South Squirrel clam flats. Over 90 percent of green crabs harvested in June 2019 at North Squirrel clam flats were female, this year the highest percentage (80%) of female green crabs per trap were found a little further North at Fisher Eddy.

Our numbers were up from previous surveys. Are we seeing the effects of a long dry summer season or an increase of the green crab population around Arrowsic? The green crabs were used for compost and we will follow up with pictures of the vegetable harvest next summer.

As in previous years the data we gathered went off to the Kennebec Estuary Land Trust.

Photos from the 2020 trapping event. They speak for themselves: Our Green Crab Survey in times of the Corona pandemic, physical distancing for the most part, masks, no party and entirely outdoors!



Interested in reading more about it? Here are a few links that a resident provided:
<https://www.maine.gov/dmr/science-research/species/invasives/greencrabs/index.html>
<http://www.islandinstitute.org/working-waterfront/sea-soil-invasive-crabs-turn-fields-green>
<https://downeast.com/nature-2/green-crab-invasion/>