

CHINESE CRABS INVADE BRITAIN CAUSING HAVOC

Efforts Futile to Prevent Migration of Strange Intruders—Fish Nets Damaged, Dams Obstructed

WASHINGTON, D. C.—(Sp.)—One of the strangest of obstacle races recently took place in Great Britain. Millions of Chinese mitten crabs from surrounding waters invaded the country, following streams as far as 400 miles inland. Efforts proved futile to halt the invasion of the crab army which bit its way through fishermen's nets and crawled on land around obstructing dams. Banks ridged with burrows, and damaged nets and weirs formed only part of the havoc caused by these intruders, which, it is reported, carry parasites capable of causing a lung disease among men and animals.

"Such migrations of crabs are not uncommon," says a bulletin from the Washington, D. C., headquarters of the National Geographic Society. "Land crabs in the tropics usually live far from the sea, but return to it every year to spawn."

Crabs Useful As Scavengers
"Each May swarms of crabs inhabiting West Indian hills rattle down over rocks to the sea, their movements making a din like that of men in armor. Letting nothing impede them, they even invade houses which block their descent. After spawning, they return to the hills, and later, thousands of young crabs are found clinging to shore rocks."

"Although sea crabs often devour oysters from entire beds, and in the tropics, land crabs cause serious damage to sugar cane plantations, rice fields and gardens, they are more useful than harmful to man. Certain omnivorous species, acting as scavengers, help to keep our shores clean. The crab family's adopted member, the Horseshoe crab, which contains ammonia, is used as food for livestock, and is ground into fertilizer."

Crabs Practice Clever Camouflage
"To escape their many enemies, crabs have developed clever methods of defense. Some go in heavily for camouflage. The mud crab sneezes mud on its back or changes the color of its shell to match the bottom. The small gray fiddler crabs scuttling warily over a beach pretty closely match wet sand; but for additional protection they dig themselves into burrows, piling the seaweed and shells of some crabs are pitted to resemble coral or gravel among which they live. The Gulf-weed crab, which Columbus found clinging to seaweed floating in the Sargasso sea, is olive green to blend with the plant."

"Crabs change their costumes at will. A Spider crab, wearing a coat of growing seaweed, when placed in an aquarium of sponges, will carefully pick off all the seaweed and plant in its place pieces of sponge."

Legs Fit Needs
"The legs of crabs are often flattened for shoveling sand, enlarged for fighting, or developed into paddles for swimming. The rear two pairs of legs of a furry, clumsy-looking crab on the Pacific coast are modified to extend over his back. This enables him to hold over him a protective umbrella of sponge, mangrove leaf, or mollusk shell."

"In Naples, people are not surprised to see small red specks running along the shore. Crabs living within them furnish the locomotion. Some crabs live inside coral, which has grown up around them, imprisoning them, while others exist surrounded by a living blanket of anemones. One resourceful crab carries an anemone like a bouquet in each of his two front claws."

"The ability of the crab to resemble, not himself, but the other fellows, reaches top notch in the Devil Mask crab, grooves in its carapace bearing uncanny resemblance to the features of a human face."

Wide Size Variance
"Crabs vary in size from the tiny parasitic pea crab, found in oysters to the giant Spider crab lurking in deep waters off Japan, whose sprawling legs are nearly six feet long and whose weight sometimes reaches 30 pounds."

"Crabs vary greatly in belligerence. The Blue crab, which appears on menus during its molting season as 'soft-shelled crab,' is one of the fiercest and most pugnacious. It burrows in the sea bottom, pouncing like a cat on its prey. One species of edible crab, when molested, plays 'possum,' drawing all its ten legs under its body, and allowing itself to be rolled about like an inert ball."

"The Hermit crab, which is more closely related to crayfish and lobsters than crabs, is so pugnacious that it is nicknamed the Soldier crab. Since its soft hind body without protective armor makes it easy prey for fish, the Hermit crab wedges it into a deserted spiral shell which serves as a portable shelter."

"With just a few slender walking legs outside, and with his large claws drawn up like a shield in front of them, the Hermit crab is well protected. Unfortunately he grows, and about twice a year has to find a new and larger covering. Tightly clutching his old shell, he will try one shell after another until he finds one that fits. When no shells are available, large Hermit crabs have been known to wear pieces of waterlogged bamboo, or even halves of coconut shells."

Wife Held Prisoner
"The female Hermit crab, which is only about one-sixth the size of the male, usually rides on top of his shell, firmly held by his claws to prevent another male from stealing her. "A large cousin of the Hermit crab is the Coconut or Hobber crab, which lives on islands of the Pacific and Indian oceans. These crabs do not wear a protecting shell, but are so powerful that specimens confined in biscuit tins have punched holes in the tin. At night they emerge from their underground burrows lined with coconut husks and feed on the pulp of coconuts. They are said to ob-

tain the pulp by hammering a hole in one end of the nut. Some observers state that the crabs climb lofty palms to procure the nuts."

Golfers Pick Right Trees
CONNEAUT, O.—(UP)—Four Conneaut golfers know how to pick their trees. When Postmaster Howard B. Kurtz, Allen Curtis, Roy Mygatt and William Brown ran to cover in a rain-storm they happened to choose two

trees both less than 30 yards from one which lightning ripped. They were uninjured.

Sleeping Sickness Takes Four
TOLEDO, O.—(UP)—Sleeping sickness has claimed its fourth fatality of the year in Toledo with the death of Mrs. Dorothy Westfall, 23, in the county hospital.

Spider in Ear
COULEE DAM, Wash.—(UP)—Dr. Walter Reiner of the Western Clinic hospital was started when he treated a construction employe for earache. He poured a liquid into the man's ear. Out crawled a large spider.

Copper Kettle Worth \$50
WEST PLAINS, Mo.—(UP) Thieves who stole a copper kettle belonging to Miss Kate Lewis sold it to a junk dealer for 14 cents not knowing it was a 250-year-old antique valued at \$50. Miss Lewis paid back the junk man and now has the kettle safely hidden.

Fined for Killing Turkeys
ALBANY, Ore.—(UP)—Ed Pederson was fined \$25 for killing two turkeys. Police said the turkeys didn't belong to him.

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