

spiny hands crab (*Charybdis hellerii*)

The swimming crab *Charybdis hellerii* was introduced to the Caribbean Basin from its native range in the Indo-Pacific, probably via shipping routes through the Suez Canal to the Mediterranean, and ultimately across the Atlantic Ocean. It was first observed in the western Atlantic in 1987, in Cuba, Venezuela and Columbia. The first occurrence in U.S. waters was reported to be its



establishment in the Indian River system of Florida by 1995; however, in 2001 a specimen was discovered by staff of the Southeastern Regional Taxonomic Center at the Marine Resources Research Institute in Charleston, SC. The specimen had been stored, unidentified, since its capture in the Folly River, SC in 1986, making it the earliest known



specimen from the Atlantic Ocean. Since the discovery of the Indian River population, *C. hellerii* has been collected occasionally from shallow coastal waters of the South Atlantic Bight between Florida and North Carolina. The greatest number of specimens in that region has been noted in the Winyah Bay estuary of South Carolina (including a gravid female and a mated pair) and in shallow waters off the Core Banks, North Carolina (all juveniles).

This species represents the third known introduction of a marine decapod on the North American Atlantic coast, yet little is known of its potential effects on the resident species in its preferred habitat.