

SOFTSHELL GREEN CRAB
PRODUCTION
2016-2018

GREEN CRAB
WORKING SUMMIT

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I first learned about the problem with green crabs at a lecture about a Manomet project to net local clam flats to protect them from green crabs.



Working in Venice, Italy, I had a chance to eat one of my favorite Venetian specialties, *moeche* –fried soft shell crabs. I wondered how they differed from our invasive green crab. When I learned that they were virtually the same, I thought about producing them here.



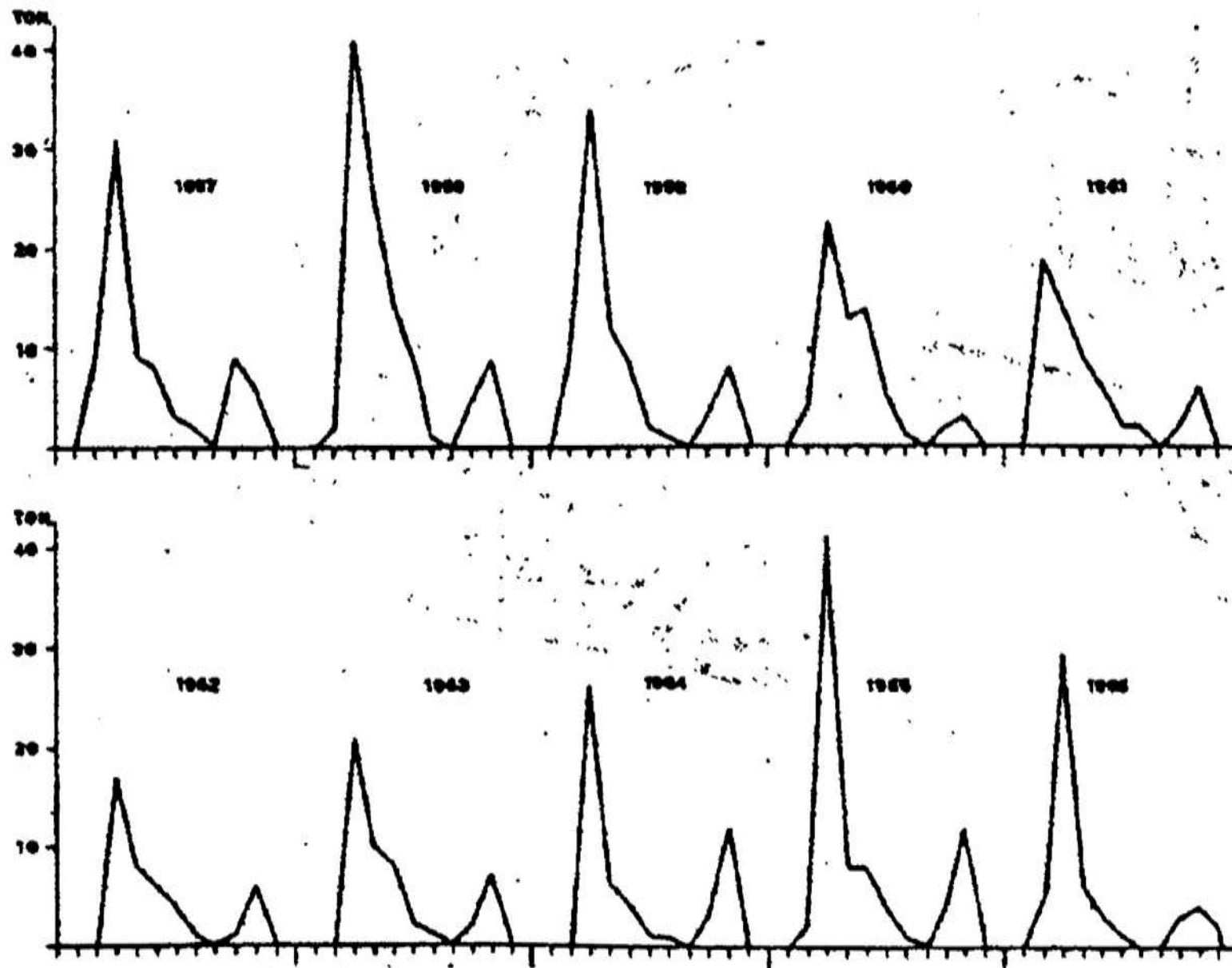


Figure 4 Monthly rhythm of the Carcinus maenas production in the southern areas of the Lagoon of Venice from 1957 to 1966

An aerial photograph of the Venetian Lagoon, showing a complex network of waterways and islands. The water is a deep blue-green color. Several islands are visible, some with green vegetation and others with brown, possibly bare or marshy. A red arrow points to a series of dark, rectangular structures in the water, which are fishing nets. The word 'Nets' is written in red text next to the arrow. In the bottom right corner, the names of three islands are labeled: 'TORCELLO', 'MAZZORBO', and 'BURAI' (partially visible).

Nets

The Venetian Lagoon is similar to Maine estuaries where green crabs are a problem.



Fyke nets in the Venetian Lagoon, with the Dolomite Mountains in the background.



I've learned about Venetian production of *Moeche*, soft-shell green crabs, from my maestro, Paolo Tagliapietra, one of the *moechecante*.

In 2016,
Paolo came to
Maine to help us
improve our skills at
crab sorting





We can't use fyke nets in Maine, so we started with used shrimp traps. They work fine, but are large and heavy when hauling by hand.

Half-size shrimp traps
are easier to use





We are now working with some used eel traps that we modified.



Traps designed specifically for green crabs are available



IN VENICE DURING THE CRAB SEASON
1000 LB. CAUGHT YIELDS 100 LB. TO MOLT
100 LB. OF MOLTED CRABS SOLD WHOLESALE
At \$25 - \$45 / LB. = \$2,500 - \$4,500

I learned the art of sorting crabs by
working with the *Moechante*



One of their secrets: always sort crabs in the shade!



In Venice, even the cats recognize a crab with good...

...molting signs



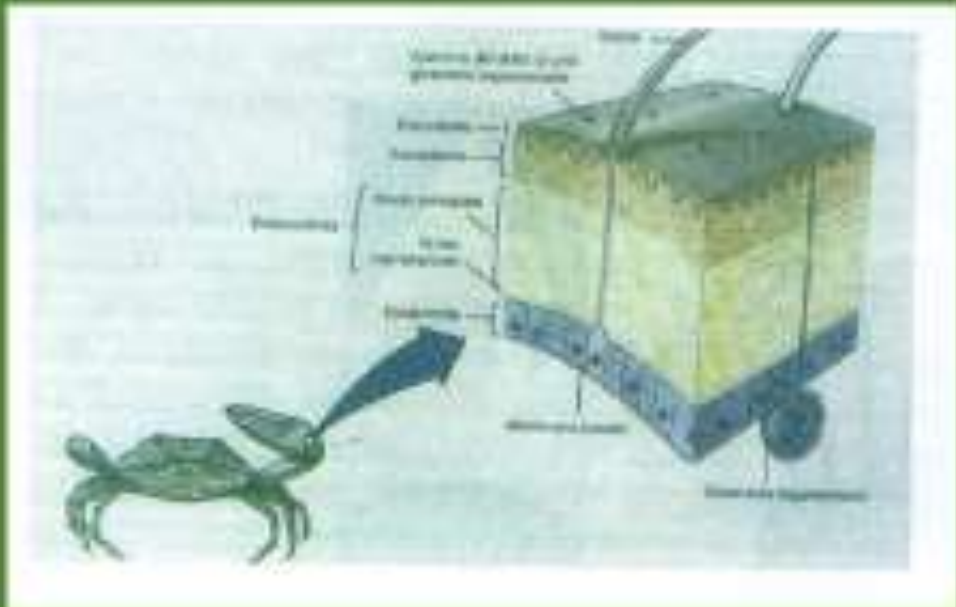
In bright sunlight, the molting sign is obscured .

The molting sign on the edge of the plates

White edge
backed by a
blue-grey shadow

In shade, the molting sign
can be seen more easily.





SPERIMENTAZIONE DI PESCA E
ALLEVAMENTO DI *CARCINUS AESTUARIUS*
FINALIZZATA ALLA PRODUZIONE DI
"MOECHE"

TUTOR: PROF. SSA PAOLA BELVEDERE
CO-TUTOR: DOTT. MAURIZIO VARAGNOLO

LAUREANTO: MARCO RUFFINO

ANNO ACCADEMICO 2004-2005



The blue-grey shadow is caused by the separation between the new and old shells.



PRE-MOLT
1-3 weeks before
molting

Molting sign apparent



Loss of molting sign,
lighter color, opaque

IMMINENT-MOLT
1-3 days before
molting