

Crab Species

The crab is one of the most iconic marine animals of Hokkaido, and a lucrative catch for fishermen. As Kushiro is the largest fishing port on Hokkaido's east coast, it receives crab catches from the North Pacific, the Sea of Okhotsk, and the Bering Sea, as well as the waters along the coast of eastern Hokkaido.

The red king crab (*Paralithodes camtschaticus*), also known as the Alaskan king crab, is a valuable winter catch. It is one of the largest crabs in the world, with a shell measuring up to 25 centimeters and legs that can reach almost 1 meter long. Red king crabs and Hanasaki crabs (spiny king crabs; *Paralithodes brevipes*), like all king crab species, have eight legs, including their claws. King crabs are not considered true crabs (which have ten legs); they are more closely related to hermit crabs. The Hanasaki crab is named for the town of Hanasaki on the Nemuro Peninsula east of Kushiro, where they are caught.

The horsehair crab (*Erimacrus isenbeckii*), which is caught in the seas off the coast of Kushiro and Nemuro in autumn, has ten legs, marking it as a true crab. Its name derives from the hairlike soft spines that cover its shell.