green porcelain crab (*Petrolisthes armatus*)

The green porcelain crab, *Petrolisthes armatus*, is a native of the eastern Pacific, from the Gulf of California to Peru. It is also found in the Atlantic, from tropical western Africa, Ascension Island, Bermuda, the Bahamas, throughout the Gulf of Mexico, the West Indies and Caribbean, and South America to southern to Brazil. In the 1930s, the species

was collected from the Florida Atlantic coast at Biscayne Bay and Miami Beach, and it was found on worm reefs south of Cape Canaveral in the early 1970s. Since that time, it has become well established in the Indian River system, however it was not reported north of Cape Canaveral until 1994, when it was observed on St. Catherines Island, Georgia. After its initial discovery there, the species increased dramatically in abundance on the island, becoming the dominant decapod crustacean on rocky substrates and tidal creek oyster bars by the following spring. In South Carolina, it was first observed in several locations in low densities in the spring of 1995. It is now well established and quite abundant on rocky rubble, oyster reefs and other shallow subtidal and intertidal habitats throughout Georgia and South Carolina, as far north as Murrells Inlet. During its recruitment season, densities of *P. armatus* greater than 20,000 animals per square meter were observed on collectors deployed for one month in its preferred habitat. Larval stages of the species have been collected from the plankton of coastal inlets in Georgia and tidal rivers in South Carolina. There are many potential pathways for its introduction, both natural and human-assisted. Although there are no data to suggest which is the principal pathway, there are several possibilities, including transport in ballast water from foreign and domestic ports and among cultured mollusks transported from localities within its previously established range. This small filter-feeding crustacean has the potential to alter the ecology of coastal waters of the South Atlantic Bight by affecting oyster growth rates and recruitment.