

# INVASIVE SPECIES ALERT!

## RED SWAMP CRAYFISH

*(Procambarus clarkia)*

REPORT INVASIVE SPECIES

[www.reportinvasives.ca](http://www.reportinvasives.ca)

### NATIVE RANGE

Red swamp crayfish are native to the Gulf Coast from Mexico to Florida, and in the Mississippi River drainage, to as far north as Illinois.

### DESCRIPTION

Red swamp crayfish...

- Range in size from 5.5 to 12 cm long as adults
- Have long narrow claws
- Are dark red in colour across their body, legs and claws
- Have bright red bumps that cover claws, head and mid-body segment
- Have a black wedge-shaped stripe on the top of the abdomen (mid-body segment)

### WHY SHOULD WE CARE?

Red swamp crayfish...

- Damage man-made infrastructure by burrowing into sediment
- Impact native fish through competition, predation, and habitat modification
- Displace native crayfish through disease transmission and competition
- Alter food webs, by feeding heavily on aquatic plants, detritus, algae and other invertebrates

### BIOLOGY & SPREAD

Red swamp crayfish have established throughout the world as a result of the live food, live bait, biological supply, and aquarium trades. They are successful invaders due to their omnivorous diet, diverse life history strategies, high fecundity, and tolerance to varying water conditions (i.e. temperature, oxygen and salinity levels). These crayfish are able to burrow tunnels into the mud, which helps them to withstand drought.

### HABITAT

Red Swamp Crayfish can be found in a variety of freshwater habitats including rivers, lakes, ponds, streams, canals, marshes, swamps, and ditches with organic debris and muddy to sandy substrates. They tend towards warm, shallow, slow moving waters.



**PRIMARY IMPACT:**  
Are aggressive predators and competitors, capable of drastically altering native ecosystems.

### DID YOU KNOW?

The Red Swamp Crayfish is the most economically valuable crayfish in the world, as well as the most invasive!

### ARE THEY HERE YET?

**No.** There have been no reports of Red Swamp Crayfish in B.C. They have become prevalent in the neighbouring states of Washington and Oregon.

# RED SWAMP CRAYFISH (*Procambarus clarkia*)

## HOW CAN WE STOP THEM?

- Do not possess, breed, release, sell or transport red swamp crayfish in BC
- Do not use live crayfish as bait in order to avoid the introduction of non-native species
- Educate anglers, crayfish trappers, bait dealers, teachers, and the general public about the ecological threats of red swamp crayfish spreading in BC

## WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I FIND ONE?

Report red swamp crayfish, or any other invasive species via the Report Invasives phone app, or via the webform available on the B.C. Inter-Ministry Invasive Species Working Group website:

[www.gov.bc.ca/invasive-species](http://www.gov.bc.ca/invasive-species)



## LOOK-ALIKES

| Species   | Distinguishing Features   |
|---|---|
|   | <p><b>Red Swamp Crayfish</b><br/>(Potential Invasive – not present in BC)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Long narrow claws</li><li>• Body is dark red in colour</li><li>• Bright red bumps cover claws, head and mid -body segment</li></ul> <p><i>Photo: Andrew C, WikimediaCommons, CC-BY-2.0</i></p>  |
|  | <p><b>Rusty Crayfish (<i>Orconectes rusticus</i>)</b><br/>(Potential Invasive – not present in BC)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Grayish-green to reddish-brown body</li><li>• Sides of shell in middle section have rusty patches</li><li>• Claws have a black band near the tip</li><li>• The rostrum (helmet over eyes) appears pinched (distinct to this species)</li></ul> <p><i>Photo: Amy Benson, US Geological Survey</i></p> |
|  | <p><b>Signal Crayfish (<i>Pacifasticus leniusculus</i>)</b><br/>(Native to B.C.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• White to blue-green patch at claw hinge (top-side)</li><li>• Underside of claw is bright red</li><li>• Top of body is red-brown in colour</li></ul> <p><i>Photo: Matthias Herborg</i></p>  |
|  | <p><b>Virile Crayfish (<i>Orconectes virilis</i>)</b><br/>(Potential Invasive – not present in BC)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Large in size, reaching over 12 cm in length</li><li>• Reddish-brown to olive-brown in colour</li><li>• Lengthwise spots occurring in pairs on the abdominal section</li><li>• Claws with distinct red-orange colored tips</li></ul> <p><i>Photo: Olden and Larson(2013)</i></p>                     |