

INVASIVE SPECIES ALERT!

RUSTY CRAYFISH

(*Orconectes rusticus*)

REPORT INVASIVE SPECIES

www.reportinvasives.ca

NATIVE RANGE

Rusty Crayfish are native to Ohio, Tennessee, and Cumberland drainages.

DESCRIPTION

Rusty crayfish...

- Have large claws that are grey-green to reddish brown in colour, with black bands at claw tips
- Range in colour from green-grey to brown-red
- May have a rust coloured spot on posterior sides of carapace (mid-body segment)
- Appear to have a pinched rostrum (helmet over eyes)

WHY SHOULD WE CARE?

Rusty Crayfish...

- Could impact native fish populations through competition, predation and habitat modification
- May reduce amount and diversity of native aquatic invertebrates through predation
- May impact recreational and commercial fisheries through feeding on fish eggs and competing with juvenile fish for food
- Are able to live in high densities

BIOLOGY & SPREAD

Rusty Crayfish are being spread in North America in bait buckets by fisherman. Once introduced, they can spread quickly into new habitats as they are opportunistic feeders, and resistant to a wide range of water temperatures. Only one fertilized female is needed to start a new population, as they can transport 100-500 fertilized eggs under their tails.

HABITAT

Rusty Crayfish inhabit lakes, ponds and streams that provide year-round suitable water quality (well oxygenated and temperatures from 0-39°C. They prefer clay, silt, sand, gravel and rock substrates. Typically rusty crayfish can be found between depths of 1 -15 meters.

ARE THEY HERE YET?

No. There have been no reported occurrences of Rusty Crayfish in B.C.



PRIMARY IMPACT:

Could predate on and compete with native species if introduced into B.C.



DID YOU KNOW?

After hatching, juvenile Rusty Crayfish cling to their mother's swimmerets (abdominal limb on underside of body) for three to four molts. These young Rusty Crayfish may stay with the female for several weeks.

RUSTY CRAYFISH (*Orconectes rusticus*)

LOOK-ALIKES

Rusty crayfish may be mistaken for three other crayfish species

- Signal Crayfish (*Pacifasticus leniusculus*); native to B.C., and the only crayfish species currently found in B.C.
- Northern Crayfish (*Orconectes virilis*); non-native, not present in B.C.
- Red Swamp Crayfish (*Procambarus clarkia*); non-native, not present in B.C.

Look-Alikes

Distinguishing Features

Rusty Crayfish



- Reach a maximum of 10 cm in length
- Grayish-green to reddish-brown body
- Claws have black bands near the claw tips
- Posterior sides of carapace have rusty patches
- The rostrum (helmet over eyes) appears pinched

Signal Crayfish



- Reach a maximum of 15 cm in length
- White to blue-green patch at claw hinge (seen from top-side)
- Undersides of claws are bright red
- Top of body is red-brown in colour

Red Swamp Crayfish



- Reach a maximum of 12 cm in length
- Long narrow claws
- Body is dark red in colour
- Bright red bumps cover claws, head and mid-body segment

Virile Crayfish



- Large in size, reaching over 12 cm in length
- Reddish-brown to olive-brown in colour
- Lengthwise spots occurring in pairs on the abdominal section
- Claws have distinct red-orange colored tips

HOW CAN WE STOP THEM?

- Do not possess, breed, ship or release Rusty Crayfish in B.C.
- Never use live fish as bait
- Do not release aquarium or bait species into the wild
- Raise awareness to avoid spread into B.C. freshwaters

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I FIND ONE?

Report Rusty 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

