



White-clawed Crayfish © Kevin O'Hara

Working with Wildlife

White-clawed Crayfish (*Austropotamobius pallipes*) Species Action Plan

Plan Co-ordinator	Rivers & Wetlands Group
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Plan Lead	Environment Agency
Latest version	November 2009

Current Extent in Northumberland

Recorded viable populations in Northumberland are found in the River Wansbeck and the Roman Wall Loughs. Other isolated populations have been recorded on the rivers Aln and Blyth, the Allerdene and Eglingham Burns and around Hallington Reservoirs.

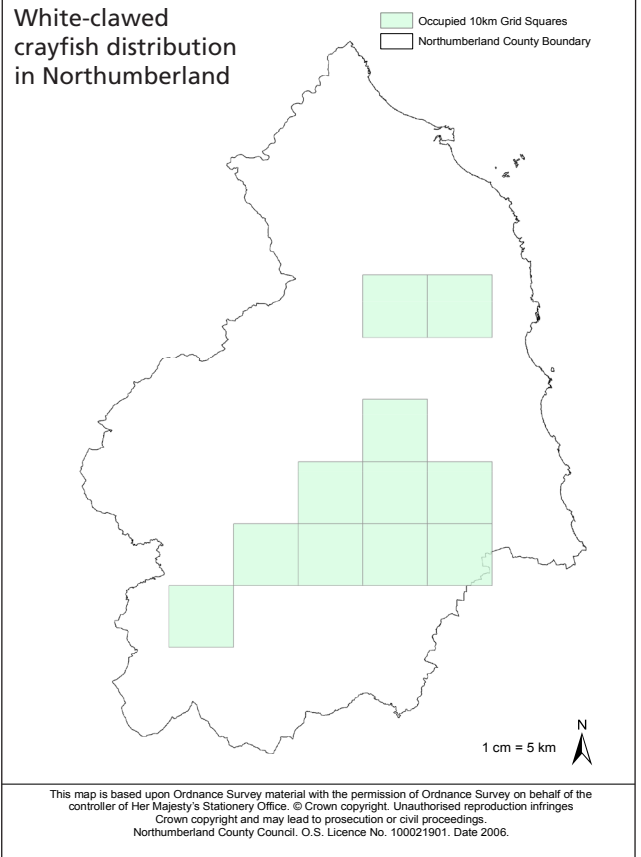
Description

The white-clawed crayfish is the only species of freshwater crayfish which is native to the UK and is found in clean, calcareous streams, rivers and lakes. The body is smooth and olive green to brown in colour and can reach up to 12cm in length from the tip of the rostrum (snout) to the telson (tail plate), making them the largest, most mobile freshwater invertebrate. It has a widespread, though patchy distribution in England, Wales and Ireland. They are distinguishable from other non-native crayfish by the underside of their claws, which are off-white to pinkish in colour, the origin of its common name. The key differences between the sexes are that females have wider abdomens for carrying the brood, whereas males have larger claws. Males also have a pair of specialist appendages on the underside of the abdomen which they use to introduce spermatophore onto the underside of the female during mating. Many populations have been lost since the 1970s.

The non-native signal crayfish (*Pacifastacus leniusculus*) was introduced to the UK in the 1970s. The signal crayfish carries a fungal disease, the crayfish plague, which the native crayfish has no defence against. Signal crayfish have been recorded in both the River Till and River Blyth.

Conservation Status

IUCN/WCMC, globally threatened
 Bern Convention, Appendix III
 EC Habitats Directive, Annexes II & IV
 UK Biodiversity Action Plan Priority Species
 Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981, Schedule 5, 9 & 14
 UK Red Data List 1993, Morris
 North East Biodiversity Action Plan Species



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Current Factors Causing Loss or Decline

- Crayfish plague
- Direct competition for food and habitat from non-native crayfish
- Habitat modification and management
- Water pollution

Associated Action Plans

Rivers & Streams

Further Information

This white-clawed crayfish action plan links to the freshwater white-clawed crayfish UK BAP action plan, whose lead partners are Dr David Rogers and Elizabeth Watson.

JNCC, 1994, Action plan for the conservation of the white-clawed crayfish in the UK

Targets

Maintain the current range of the white-clawed crayfish in Northumberland of 11 ten kilometre squares by 2015

Code	Priority Actions	Date
WCC A01	Monitor the range of the White-clawed Crayfish in Northumberland	Ongoing
WCC A02	Carry out a targeted campaign to address diffuse pollution issues in the Wansbeck catchment through farm visits	2008
WCC A03	Carry out an awareness campaign for angling clubs and fisheries owners on the importance of disinfection to prevent the spread of crayfish plague	2009
WCC A04	Identify areas for natural expansion of crayfish range	2009
WCC A05	Carry out targeted habitat improvement on sites suitable for increasing the crayfish's range (10km stretch)	2012
WCC A06	Determine the distribution of signal crayfish through surveys on the Blyth and Till and monitor their spread	2009
WCC A07	Identify still waters that would make suitable 'Ark' sites	2010
WCC A08	Investigate the feasibility of re-introduction of crayfish to previous historic sites, particularly the North Tyne tributaries	2011