

Rusty crayfish

Faxonius rusticus

Description

First discovered in 1960s in Wisconsin and Minnesota.

Identification

Up to 6 inches (with claws); brown body; males often with dark rusty spots on each side (as though you picked it up with paint on your fingers); large, smooth grayish-green to reddish-brown claws with a black band at the tips, claws have an oval gap when closed; "S" - shaped movable claw.

Habitat

Native to the Ohio River Basin. Lakes, ponds, rivers, streams; bottom areas with rocks, logs or other debris for cover; needs permanent water.

Reproduction

Reproduces sexually and oviparously. Mating typically occurs in the fall and eggs are laid in the spring, but mating is reported to also occur in late summer, early spring. Males transfer sperm to





the female who stores it until the eggs are laid, which usually occurs in the spring when water temperatures rise. The eggs are externally fertilized by the female and attached to the swimmerets on the underside of the female's abdomen. Females lay from 80-575 eggs. Since females store sperm, only one female carrying sperm is necessary to begin a new population.

Impact

Eliminate vegetation that provides cover for fish and habitat for invertebrates, an important food for fish and waterfowl. They also can harm native fish populations by eating their eggs and young. Eats twice as much as native crayfish and has the ability to hybridize with native crayfish.

Similar

Calico crayfish (*Orconectes immunis*), which has no black bands, gap is a definite notch and claws are narrower and elongate; Golden crayfish (*Orconectes luteus*), can only be distinguished by coloration; and Northern Clearwater crayfish (*Orconectes propinquus*), which has a dark brown to black patch on the top of the abdomen.

Monitoring and Rapid Response

Eradicating established infestations is impossible. Do not use as bait outside the Ohio River drainage.

Credits

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