

Red swamp crayfish

Procambarus clarkii

Description

Probably introduced through aquaculture, as it is a popular food worldwide.

Identification

Up to 5 inches (with claws); dark red body and claws with spiky, bright red bumps; black wedge-shaped stripe on underside; females can burrow.

Habitat

Native to the Gulf Coast and the Mississippi River drainage to Illinois. Prefer flowing to non-flowing freshwater, salt water; permanent ponds; areas of streams and ditches with organic debris; agricultural areas; wetlands; builds chimney-like burrows.

Reproduction



Short life cycle and highly reproductive. It matures when it reaches a size between 6 and 12.5 cm. A 10 cm female may produce up to 500 eggs, while smaller females may produce around 100 eggs. Eggs are 0.4 mm, and newly hatched crayfish remain with their mother in the burrow for up to eight weeks and undergo two moults before they can fend for themselves. Populations contain individuals that are incubating eggs or carrying young throughout the year. This allows the crayfish to reproduce at the first available opportunity. In places with a long flooding period, greater than 6 months, there may be at least two reproductive periods in autumn and spring.

Impact

Red swamp crayfish can be a host for parasites and diseases and can carry crayfish fungus plague. Once established, they can impact an ecosystem due to its diverse diet, including plants, insects, snails, fish and amphibians. It aggressively competes with native crayfish and other species for food and habitat.

Similar

The White River crayfish (*Procambarus zonangulus*).

Monitoring and Rapid Response

Clean your watercraft, trailer, motor, equipment, clothing, boots, buckets, etc. Remove all visible mud, aquatic plants and animals before leaving any water access. Drain water from your boat bilge, motor, jet drives and livewell by removing the drain plug and opening all water draining devices away from the boat ramp. Remove water from any bait buckets, diving gear, boots/waders, or any other gear. Dry everything at least five days before going to other waters or spray/rinse recreational equipment with high pressure and/or hot water.

Credits

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