



Crayfish Guidance for Riverfly Monitoring

Background

Our rivers are home to England's only native crayfish species, the white-clawed crayfish. Unfortunately, this species has rapidly declined across the country over the past 50 years due to habitat loss, pollution and the introduction of Invasive Non-Native Species (INNS).

There are a number of invasive crayfish species in England. Signal crayfish are the most widespread and have contributed significantly to the loss of white-clawed crayfish in our freshwater ecosystems. This is mainly due to a waterborne disease they carry, crayfish plague which is deadly to our native crayfish.



White-clawed crayfish – Laurie Ramsey

What to do if you find a crayfish during your survey

We kindly ask that you follow the below **Do's** and **Don'ts** if you come across a crayfish during your survey:

✓ **Do leave all crayfish where you find them** – It is illegal to take live crayfish away from the riverbank. If you accidentally capture an invasive crayfish, legally you can release it immediately back where you caught it.

✓ **Do report crayfish sightings** – You can report crayfish sightings to the Environment Agency and to INNS Mapper even if you are unsure of the species (all records are verified). If you are able to take a photo, please get a clear image of the crayfish's rostrum (nose) as this will help with correct identification. Reporting crayfish sightings helps us monitor crayfish populations, so we can better understand their distribution and prioritise conservation efforts.

✓ **Do practice 'Check Clean Dry'** - Following CCD guidance on biosecurity, for your clothing and equipment whilst surveying will prevent the spread of crayfish plague and other INNS between watercourses.



✗ **Don't kill crayfish you accidentally catch** – Crayfish species can often be misidentified; it can be hard to tell the difference between crayfish species and near impossible when they are very small. Killing of invasive crayfish you accidentally catch will have no impact on the population and increases the risk of spreading crayfish plague.

✗ **Don't pick up any species of crayfish (unless authorised to do so)** – White-clawed crayfish are a protected species under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981). This means it is illegal to harm, disturb or take (including picking up or handling) this species. Unnecessary handling signal crayfish could contribute to the spread of crayfish plague.

Find Out More...

Below are a number of websites where you can find out more about crayfish and what you can do to help:

[North Yorkshire Crayfish Forum \(arcgis.com\)](http://arcgis.com)

<https://innsmapper.org/home>

www.nonnativespecies.org

