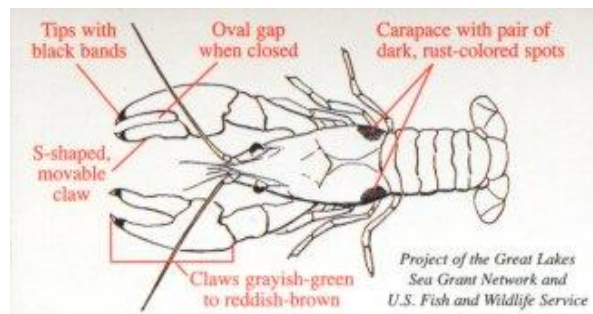


THE RUSTY CRAYFISH

The rusty crayfish (*Orconectes rusticus*) is native to Ohio. It has spread into our lakes and rivers by anglers who are using it as bait. Discovered in 2001 in the province of Quebec, especially in Lake Pemichangan and the Ottawa River, the rusty crayfish spreads slowly.



Picture 1. Rusty crayfish (source: www.invadingspecies.com)

HOW TO RECOGNIZE IT? (PICTURE 1)

- Larger than other crayfish, about 10 cm excluding claws
- Rust-colored patches at maturity on both sides of the carapace
- Larger and stronger claws than other crayfish and presence of black bands near the tip of these claws
- General colors of gray-blue and dark brown-green

ECOLOGY OF THE RUSTY CRAYFISH

The rusty crayfish is more voracious and more aggressive than other native crayfish species. Its natural habitat is in lakes, ponds and rivers. It also adapts well in either still or flowing waters that allow it to swim upstream and colonize other locations. This crayfish inhabits rocky substrates where it pushes away other crayfish species. It can also grow on other substrates such as sand, clay or vegetated area.



Picture 2. Rusty crayfish (source: Maria José Maezo)

This crayfish feeds on aquatic plants, benthic invertebrates (i.e., aquatic worms, snails, leeches, insects and crustaceans), detritus, eggs and small fish.

The rusty crayfish spawn during the spring and early fall. A female can lay from 80 to 575 eggs. It mates earlier than other crayfish species and its fertility is

higher. In addition, development of eggs and young crayfish is faster.

IMPACTS

Because of its voracious appetite, the rusty crayfish consumes twice the amount consumed by native crayfish species. It consumes all vegetation, thus considerably reducing the abundance and diversity of aquatic plants, consequently reducing the number of invertebrates that feed on these plants. This behavior also leads to the loss of shelter and breeding sites for many fish species. Furthermore, the aggressiveness of the rusty crayfish causes the displacement of native crayfish to other environments less favorable to their development making them particularly vulnerable to predators. Finally, this crayfish can be so abundant that swimming becomes unpleasant.

CONTROL METHODS

Once it is introduced, the rusty crayfish becomes very difficult to control.

VECTORS

- Anglers (boats, fishing equipment, bait buckets, etc.). Crayfish are often used as bait for sport fishing and throwing those baits in the water can result in contamination
- Aquariums owners



Picture 3. Rusty crayfish (source: Maria José Maezo)

WEBSITES

For more information or to find the information above you can visit the following websites:

<http://www.especiesenvahissantes.gc.ca/Francais/LinkSearch.asp?x=1&formAction=SubjectArea>

<http://www.mddep.gouv.qc.ca/biodiversite/inter.htm>

<http://www.mrn.gouv.qc.ca/publications/faune/ecrevisses-du-quebec.pdf>

<http://www.invadingspecies.com/>

http://www.protectyourwaters.net/hitchhikers/crustaceans_rusty_crayfish.php

http://www.cws-scf.ec.gc.ca/publications/inv/index_f.cfm

<http://www.anstaskforce.gov/default.php>