

White-Clawed Crayfish

Austropotamobius pallipes

Species Action Plan

1. Introduction

The white-clawed crayfish is the only species of crayfish native to the British

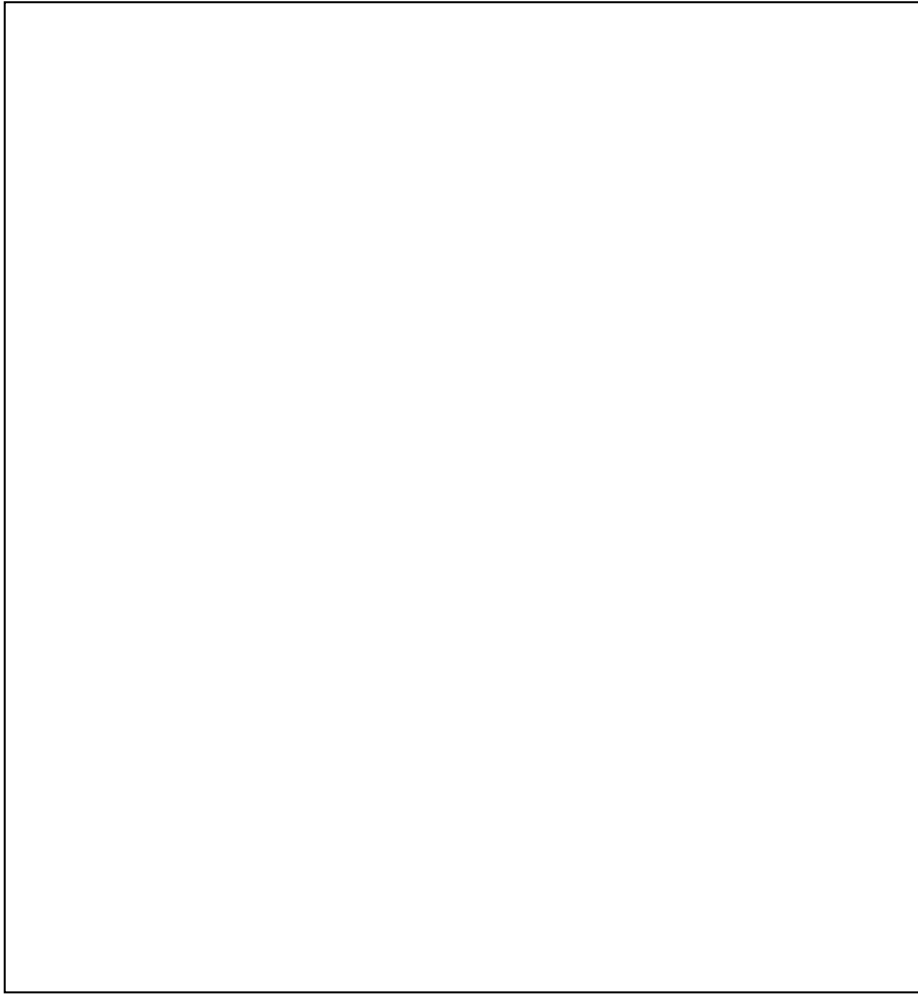


Figure 1. Records of white-clawed crayfish in Worcestershire. Data supplied and map prepared by Worcestershire Biological Records Centre.

2.3 Legislation and site designation

This species is listed in Appendix III of the Bern Convention and Annexes II and V of the EC Habitats Directive. It is classed as *Endangered* on the IUCN Red List. It is protected under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006. Natural England enforces this legislation by requiring a Crayfish Conservation Licence to be sought for any activity that has the potential to detrimentally impact crayfish. Under the Habitats Directive sites should be designated as Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) for their protection. There are several rivers that have been designated as SACs for the presence of crayfish, although none of these occur in Worcestershire. There are several watercourses in the county which are designated Local Wildlife Sites, in part due to the presence of native crayfish.

It is an offence to use any species of crayfish for angling bait as well as being an offence to fish for any species of crayfish without a licence under Environment Agency bylaws.

2.4 Summary of important sites

Given the fragile status of white-clawed crayfish in Britain and throughout Europe, all known populations listed within section 2.2 are considered important for the long term survival of the species.

The Dowles Brook catchment is characterised by deep, steep sided valleys that give the Wyre Forest its distinctive topography. The stony channels are subject to considerable seasonal changes in flow rate and level. The ecology of the catchment has been impacted by nutrient enrichment and increased sediment load resulting from intensive agricultural practices at the headwaters of the tributaries, although several smaller streams that flow entirely within the forest have escaped these impacts.

A reduction in water quality in the past through discharges to watercourses and as a result of diffuse pollution from agriculture have also lead to a reduction in the quality of habitat for crayfish. However in recent years water quality in our rivers and streams has improved significantly as a result of better regulation and tighter controls over discharges to watercourses.

There are also various natural predators of crayfish including several fish species, otter (*Lutra lutra*), mink (*Mustela vison*) and even water vole (*Arvicola amphibious*). In healthy river systems where crayfish exist at normal levels predation will not have a significant impact upon populations. However where populations are already in decline predation may be enough to have a significant impact.

Water quantity is also a crucial criterion affecting the viability of the crayfish, with over abstraction or prolonged drought having the potential to decimate populations. Over siltation of watercourses also has a negative impact.

4. Current Action

4.1 Local Protection

The majority of rivers and streams known to contain white-clawed crayfish are designated as Local Wildlife Sites (LWS).

4.2 Site management and programmes of action

The Kemerton Lake ARK site was established in 2010 through a project led by Buglife, in partnership with landowners Kemerton Conservation Trust. The former gravel pit was chosen as it is entirely isolated from surrounding watercourses. Two translocations took place from a donor site in Warwickshire.

In 2016 the Severn Rivers Trust and the Environment Agency collaborated on an experimental project in the Suckley Brook catchment to tri4(t)-2(-9(867 Tm 0 Tc[

