

# Rusty Crayfish

*Orconectes rusticus*



## What is it and Why is it a Problem?

The Rusty Crayfish is a large, aggressive species of freshwater crayfish that lives in lakes, rivers, ponds and streams with clay, silt and gravel bottoms which have lots of rocks or other hiding places. They consume large amounts of aquatic vegetation used as spawning and foraging habitat by native fish and they do not have natural predators since their large size and aggressive behaviour protects them from predatory fish. These features also make it easy for them to outcompete native species of crayfish for food and habitat. The females can carry 200 eggs at a time, making them easy to establish in a new area with just one female. Once established, they are practically impossible to eradicate permanently.



## What Does it Look Like?

- Adults measure between 7.5 - 13 cm long
- Have rusty patches located on either side
- Claws form an oval gap when closed and are grayish-green to reddish-brown in colour with black bands near the tips
- The area of shell in front of the eyes (rostrum) is smooth, pinched and concave
- Can be differentiated from native species of crayfish by confirming the rusty patches on either side of the shell, the pinched rostrum and the black banded claws



## How Can it be Managed?

- Report sightings of any invasive species online through [EDDMapS Ontario](#), a web-based mapping system which also has an

app, or through the [Invasive Species in Ontario](#) project on [iNaturalist.org](#).

- Learn how to identify it so you can avoid accidentally spreading it with your fishing gear and equipment. Inspect your boat, trailer and fishing gear before leaving a fishing spot and before heading to a new one to remove any mud, plant fragments and animals. Dispose of any animal and plant matter in the garbage. Refer to the [OMNRF's Boater's Action Plan](#) for more information on cleaning your boat and gear.
- Release water from your motor, live well, bilge and transom wells once on land.
- If you catch a Rusty Crayfish, you must either destroy it to prevent further growth and reproduction, or you can use it as fishing bait in the same lake. You are allowed to possess up to 36 Rusty Crayfish to be used as bait at once; however, remember that they must be used in the same water body from which they came and that it is illegal to transport them overland.
- Do not release aquarium or pond contents into water bodies. Oftentimes invasive aquatic animals end up reaching water bodies when people dispose of them in lakes and rivers.

## References

[Great Lakes Nonindigenous Species Information System](#), produced by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[Ontario Invading Species Awareness Program](#), developed by the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNR), and the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters (OFAH).