North American Signal Crayfish

Pacifastacus leniusculus

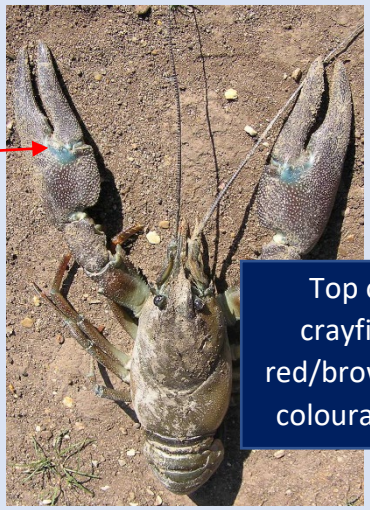
Invasive Species Alert

Key features for Identification

Turquoise/white blotch on the 'hinge' of the claw

Much larger than the native white-clawed crayfish. Max size of 16-18cm (from tail to top of head)

Claws are robust and smooth on both surfaces



Top of crayfish red/brown in colouration

Underside of claw bright red

Why is it a concern?

- Carrier of '**crayfish plague**' - a disease caused by a fungus (*Aphanomyces astaci*). The 'plague' does not impact the signal crayfish but is lethal to our native crayfish, driving them towards extinction
- High levels of native crayfish mortality, resulting from crayfish plague, can increase the nutrient load on a waterbody as individuals decompose, impacting the ecosystem
- They out-compete the native white-clawed crayfish as they grow faster, are more aggressive, more fecund and can tolerate a wider range of conditions
- They feed on a wide range of aquatic plant and animals, including juvenile fish, fish eggs and aquatic invertebrates; reducing populations of native species and affecting food webs
- Can cause additional damage to river systems by constructing burrows in the banks leaving them prone to collapse

How could it get here?

- The most likely route into N.I is through intentional introduction or escape from aquaria
- Crayfish plague can be introduced independent of the signal crayfish, usually via spores hitch-hiking on equipment that has not been **Checked Cleaned and Dried** between use in different waterbodies

Is it present in Northern Ireland?

The signal crayfish is not present in Northern Ireland however, crayfish plague has been recorded, most recently in the Upper Ballinderry River Catchment, September 2023

What can I do?

1. Always follow **Check Clean Dry** protocols:

CHECK CLEAN DRY
invasivespeciesni.co.uk

2. Report all signal crayfish sightings via:

CEDaR Centre for Environmental Data and Recording

iRecord

3. Report any dead native crayfish that you see via:

invasivespecies@daera-ni.gov.uk

Report all sightings of non-native crayfish

Invasive Species Northern Ireland
invasivespeciesni.co.uk

NIEA Northern Ireland Environment Agency
www.ni-environment.gov.uk

Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs
www.daera-ni.gov.uk