

Killer Shrimp

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Species Description

Scientific name: *Dikerogammarus villosus*

AKA: Killer Shrimp

Native to: South-east Europe

Habitat: Still or flowing freshwater and brackish water, often among hard surfaces or vegetation.

A highly invasive non-native shrimp, it is not currently recorded in Northern Ireland or Ireland. There are few known populations in GB. A key identifying feature is the presence of cone shaped protrusions on the tail. Often larger than native freshwater shrimp species and sometimes with a striped appearance.

It is a voracious predator, killing invertebrates and small fish. It quickly dominates habitats it invades and can significantly alter their ecology.

It is tolerant of poor water quality and can survive in damp conditions for up to five days. It could therefore be spread in ballast water and also by people on kit used in the water, including angling gear, boats, kayaks and trailers. Good biosecurity is essential to reduce the risk of spread.

As *Dikerogammarus villosus* is not ordinarily resident in Northern Ireland, under the Invasive Alien Species (Enforcement and Permitting) Order (Northern Ireland) 2019 it is an offence to release or allow this species to escape into the wild.



Key ID Features



Larger than native shrimps. Size varies depending on age. Can grow to 30mm from tip of tail to tip of head, more commonly 10-20mm (relatively large for a freshwater amphipod).

Report any sightings via; CEDaR Online Recording - <https://www2.habitas.org.uk/records/ISI>, iRecord app or Invasive Species Northern Ireland website - <http://invasivespeciesni.co.uk/report-sighting>

Biosecurity

Dikerogammarus villosus is a high risk species and water users should adhere to the Clean, Check, Dry campaign.

- **Check** your equipment and clothing for living organisms. Pay particular attention to areas that are damp or hard to inspect.
- **Clean** and wash all equipment, footwear and clothes thoroughly. If you do come across any organisms, leave them at the water body where you found them.
- **Dry** all equipment and clothing – some species can live for many days in moist conditions. Make sure you don't transfer water elsewhere.

Similar Species

Dikerogammarus villosus

Invasive non-native
For comparison



Tail with distinctive cones

Gammarus pulex

Invasive non-native



Lacks dark stripes of *D. villosus*

Tail without cones

Gammarus tigrinus

Invasive non-native



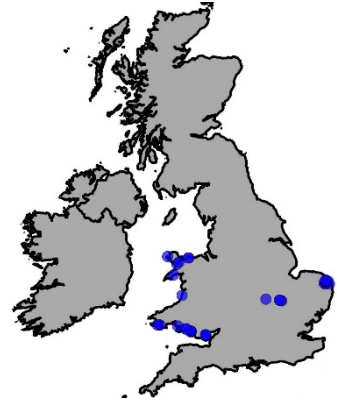
Dark markings but lacks banding of *D. villosus*

Tail without cones

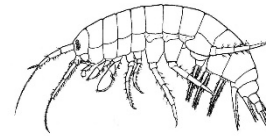
Usually smaller, approx. 10-15mm long

Distribution

Present in the UK and 18 European countries. It is not present in Northern Ireland.

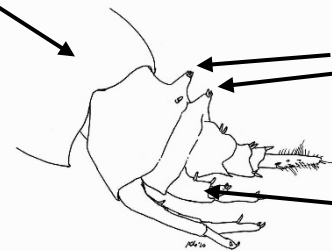


Source: NBN Atlas – available at <https://species.nbnatlas.org/species/NHMSYS0020475521>
Check website for current distribution



Tail features can be used to distinguish *D. villosus* from species as follows:

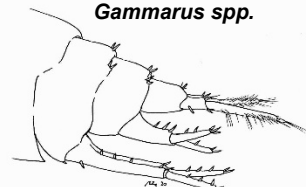
Dikerogammarus villosus



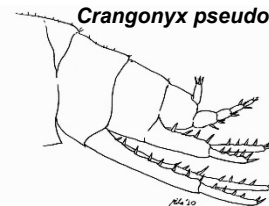
Two distinctive cone-shaped protrusions topped with small spines.

Small clusters or spines or hairs, but no protrusions.

Gammarus spp.



Crangonyx pseudogracilis



May have small hairs, but lacks spines or protrusions

Line drawings © M.Dobson/FBA

References and further reading:

Daisie Factsheet (www.europe-aliens.org) Nobanis Factsheet (www.nobanis.org)
www.invasivespeciesireland.com
Photos from: Phase4 Environmental Limited, Michal Grabowski.

Adapted for Northern Ireland
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