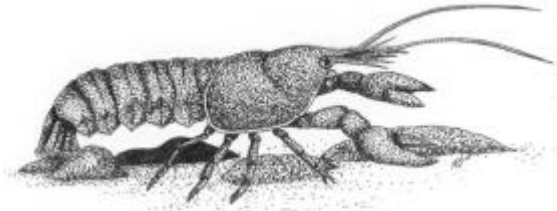


WHITE-CLAWED CRAYFISH *AUSTROPOTAMOBIOUS PALLIPES* SPECIES ACTION PLAN

1. INTRODUCTION

The white-clawed crayfish is a UKBAP priority species³⁹ and is important for biodiversity conservation nationally and locally. It is the only native freshwater crayfish in Britain.

Relevant Legislation/Species Status	
priority (P) or species of conservation concern (S)	P
EC Habitats Directive	Annex I Ia, Va
Conservation Regs 1994	
Berne Convention 1982	III
Bonn Convention 1979	
CITES 1975	
WCA 1981	Sch. 5
IUCN Red List of Endangered Animals 1994	globally threatened



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2. CURRENT STATUS

2.1 UK and Wales

The white-clawed crayfish was formerly widespread in France, Spain and Italy, but populations are now confined to a diminishing number of areas. It is widespread in clean, calcareous streams, rivers and lakes in England and along the Welsh border, and some areas of Northern Ireland. However, populations have been lost since the 1970s⁹, and apart from a single record in Pembrokeshire, its current distribution is restricted to eastern parts of Wales. These are concentrated in the Wye (its Welsh stronghold), Severn and Usk catchments⁹, but the EA survey (see 4.1) confirmed a major decline even in these areas. Its absence from most of West Wales is probably linked to its preference for calcium-rich, well-oxygenated waters and its tendency to avoid more acidic catchments⁹. Adults can have a body length of up to 10 or 12cm. It is mostly active at night when it feeds upon insect larvae, water snails and tadpoles, and during the day it hides under large stones or in riverbank burrows.

2.2 Caerphilly County Borough

Although there is some anecdotal evidence, no confirmed records of this crayfish species have been made in the county borough. There are some records in the Brecon Beacons National Park adjacent to Caerphilly county borough which suggests that it may occur in the area, but a full survey of rivers, particularly slow-moving clean, unpolluted waters, and parts of the canal, for the species as no such work has been formerly undertaken.

2.3 Links with Habitats

- **Wetlands** (rivers and streams, canals)

3. CURRENT FACTORS AFFECTING THE SPECIES

- Habitat modifications and management of water bodies.
- Water pollution, particularly from sheep dip chemicals and other pesticides.

- Direct competition for food and habitat from the 3 non-native crayfish species.
- Crayfish plague, a disease caused by the fungus *Aphanomyces astaci* is carried by some North American crayfish including the signal crayfish *Pacifastacus leniusculus*. Spores from the fungus can be transmitted by a variety of other means, including water, fish and damp equipment. The white-clawed crayfish is particularly vulnerable to this disease.

4. CURRENT ACTION

- 4.1 CCW surveys in the River Wye catchment area strongly indicate a population decline and the EA survey (2000) of the River Wye and Usk confirmed this.
- 4.2 A national conservation strategy has been developed which advocates controls on crayfish farming to minimise the threat from crayfish plague, eradicate alien crayfish and improve water quality of occupied catchments.
- 4.3 A JNCC action plan was published in 1994 for the conservation of this crayfish species.
- 4.4 MAFF are to use fisheries legislation to regulate the keeping of non-native species to protect the native crayfish and habitats in England, Wales (NAWAD) and Scotland.
- 4.5 The three non-native species of crayfish are listed on Schedule 9 of the WCA 1981, which makes it an offence to release them or allow them to escape into the wild.

5. OBJECTIVES AND TARGETS

5.1 UK Objectives and Targets

- 5.1.1 Attempt to maintain the present distribution of this species by limiting the spread of crayfish plague, limiting the spread of non-native species, and by maintaining appropriate habitat conditions.

5.2 Caerphilly Objectives and Targets

- 5.2.1 Identify the current distribution and population of the white-clawed crayfish in the county borough (Target: 2004).
- 5.2.2 Maintain and enhance the distribution of the white-clawed crayfish (Target: ongoing).

6. ACTION AND KEY PARTNERS

Action	Key Partners		Year to be complete or in place by:									
	Lead	Partners	2003	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	
6.1 The only necessary action at present is to commission a survey of rivers, streams and the canal in order to identify the current status of the species in the county borough.	EA	CCW CCBC	✓	✓								