



## Conserving Our Crayfish

The White-clawed crayfish (*Austropotamobius pallipes*) is one of the UK's largest freshwater invertebrates and is our only native crayfish. It was once a widespread and common species in English and Welsh rivers, but has suffered severe declines.

Many populations of White-clawed crayfish have already been lost and most of those remaining in streams and rivers are at risk of loss in future. The decline has been caused by non-native invasive crayfish species such as the American Signal crayfish (*Pacifastacus leniusculus*), the spread of a disease known as crayfish plague, habitat degradation and pollution.

The conservation of White-clawed crayfish is taking place through a number of projects and methods across the UK:

**Ark sites** - isolated refuge sites – where new populations can be established, safe from non-native crayfish, disease and other threats. Read our document on [Selecting Ark Sites for Crayfish](#).

**Captive breeding** - efforts are being made to captive breed White-clawed crayfish, partly to increase our understanding of their ecology and to allow people to see them close up and understand their plight. Captive breeding can be used in conjunction with Ark sites to boost the number of crayfish for establishing a new population. See how [Bristol Zoo are breeding White-clawed crayfish](#) as part of the South West Crayfish Project.

**Habitat management** - Sensitive habitat management is key to conserving and enhancing healthy populations of White-clawed crayfish in the wild and in Ark sites. For more information, take a look at our [Species Management Sheet](#) and see how small streams play an important part in [White-clawed crayfish ecology](#).

**Control of invasive, non-native crayfish** - Once established, eradication of introduced crayfish is very difficult and there is no one easy answer to the problem. However in appropriate situations, effective control may take place using biocides or through trapping, which is carried out by professionals. See our factsheet on [Invasive Crayfish ID and distribution](#).

**Control of plague and other diseases** - We encourage all water users to help prevent the spread of crayfish plague and invasive species by checking, cleaning and drying their equipment. See our information on disease control in [Crayfish in Crisis](#).

**Research** - A number of universities in the UK are undertaking research projects on both White-claws and introduced species in order to understand the species, their problems and impacts better so we can improve our conservation work in the future. You can read further information on current crayfish research in [Crayfish Projects Near You](#) and within our [Crayfish Bibliography](#) or [Crayfish research projects and Journals](#) downloads.

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