



Crayfish FAQs

Why is the White-clawed crayfish endangered?

White-clawed crayfish are declining because of damage to their river and stream habitats, and competition and spread of disease by non-native, invasive crayfish species.

Can I trap and eat White-clawed crayfish?

No. As an endangered species, they are protected by law and trapping them is a criminal offence.

Can I help White-clawed crayfish by trapping and eating invasive species such as Signal crayfish?

Trapping invasive crayfish is unlikely to help the conservation of White-clawed crayfish because this can lead to their spread, as well as introducing crayfish plague and other invasive species to unaffected water bodies. The rules differ depending on which part of the UK you would like to trap in because these areas are covered by different environment agencies. In England, the Environment Agency (EA) allow trapping of Signal crayfish in some areas of the UK under licence, but in habitats that have White-claws and other protected species permission is unlikely to be given. You must not trap non-native crayfish without written consent from the Environment Agency (EA) in England or Natural Resources Wales (NRW) in Wales. In Scotland, the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) state that it is illegal to trap for signal crayfish for personal consumption or for onward sale. Any trapping for scientific purposes, or to limit numbers, requires a licence. Signal crayfish have not been recorded in Northern Ireland yet.

What should I do if I find a crayfish?

Firstly, leave it alone! The best thing to do is to make a note of where you found it and report it to your local environment agency office. (EA in England, NRW in Wales, NIEA in Northern Ireland and SEPA in Scotland).

Can I keep Crayfish as Pets?

Only Redclaw crayfish (*Cherax quadricarinatus*) are allowed to be kept in aquaria and only in England and Wales (not Scotland or Ireland). If you have a crayfish and are now uncertain whether it is a legal Redclaw crayfish or not, ask your local environment agency office to identify it for you. (EA in England, NRW in Wales, NIEA in Northern Ireland and SEPA in Scotland).

Only buy Redclaw crayfish from official pet shops and don't buy crayfish over the internet because they could easily be an illegal species.

If you no longer want to keep a pet Redclaw crayfish, you should try to take it back to the shop where you bought it or contact your local animal sanctuary or branch of the RSPCA.

Never release an aquarium crayfish or any other aquarium pet into the wild. If you see or know of any illegal species being sold in an aquarium shop contact your local environmental agency office (EA in England, NRW in Wales, NIEA in Northern Ireland and SEPA in Scotland).

Can I eat Crayfish in restaurants and buy them in markets?

If you are buying crayfish in a market or eating it in a restaurant you can help protect our White-claws by making informed choices.

At markets avoid buying live crayfish. This will help to reduce the spread of introduced crayfish. This is because the 'live' crayfish food trade increases the risks of accidental escapes and introductions. This doesn't mean you have to stop eating crayfish as they are available frozen or processed instead.

At restaurants check whether the crayfish being sold was bought live. If the restaurant buys live crayfish try to tell them about the plight of the White-claws and encourage them not to buy live crayfish – you could choose something else from the menu.

If you live in Scotland or Northern Ireland it is illegal for fish markets and restaurants to have any live freshwater crayfish. If you want to report illegal live sales see contact details below.

In England contact - the **Environment Agency** on 03708 506 506

In Northern Ireland contact - the **Northern Ireland Environment Agency** on 0845 302 0008

In Scotland contact - the **Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA)** on 03000 99 66 99

In Wales contact – **Natural Resources Wales (NRW)** on 0300 065 3000

How can I help our native White-clawed crayfish?

If you are a water user, you can help to stop the spread of invasive species from one water body to another in equipment, shoes and clothing by following three simple steps: Check, Clean, Dry.



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