

Species Action Plan: White-clawed Crayfish – *Austropotamobius pallipes*

Current Status and Importance

- The White-clawed Crayfish is the only species of freshwater crayfish native to the UK.
- It is listed in Appendix III of the Bern Convention and Annexes II and V of the EC Habitats Directive and classed as 'Globally Threatened' by the IUCN. It is protected under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) in respect of taking from the wild and sale.
- There is a regionally important population within the Huddersfield Narrow Canal in Kirklees.

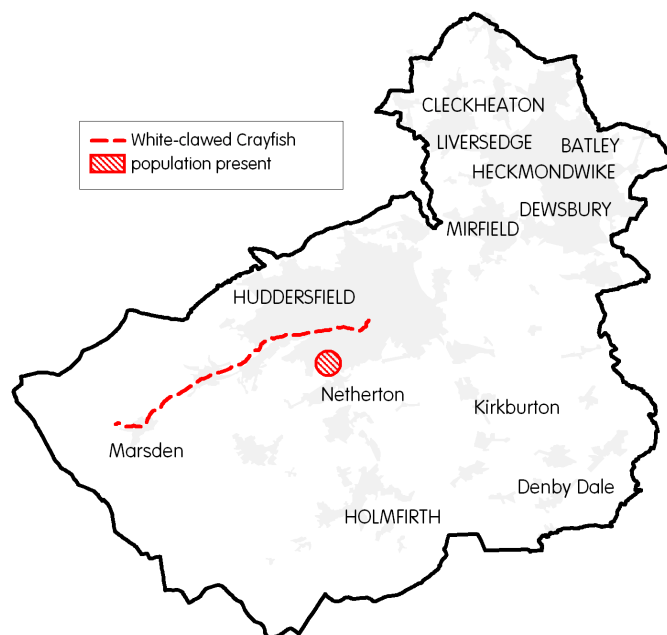


Photograph Copyright Natural England

Habitat

- The white-clawed crayfish lives in both still and flowing freshwater habitats although not usually in acidic streams. Rock crevices, where the species hides up in the daytime, are an important component of the habitat.
- The species forages at night, feeding on a range of vegetable and animal foods and detritus.
- Within the Huddersfield Narrow Canal they use the stone retaining walls for shelter and can exist at high densities.

Distribution



© Crown Copyright. All Rights Reserved. Kirklees Council, Licence Number 100019241.

White-clawed Crayfish populations in Kirklees

- Native crayfish populations are becoming more fragmented across Europe, primarily due to the spread of Signal Crayfish.
- Within Kirklees the White-clawed Crayfish is known to occur in the Huddersfield Narrow Canal and a number of ponds within the Colne and Holme Valleys. The Narrow Canal is a Site of Scientific Interest (SSI).
- It has also been found in the River Colne at Slaithwaite and there are unconfirmed records from the River Dearne and Fenay Beck.
- The Signal Crayfish occurs in both the River Dearne and Fenay Beck, where it appears to be thriving. It has also been reported to occur in the Broad Canal.

Conservation Issues

- A major problem for the white-clawed crayfish is the introduction of the Signal Crayfish (*Pacifastacus leniusculus*) from North America. This species both out-competes the White-clawed Crayfish and also carries crayfish plague - a fungal disease fatal to the native species. There is no known way of eradicating Signal Crayfish populations.
- General neglect of ponds can lead to their loss either through natural succession or ultimately, development.
- Increased fish stocking may lead to greater predation of crayfish.
- Pollution of water bodies.

Objectives

- Identify sites suitable for species introduction and undertake programme to achieve this.
- Protect and maintain the viability of existing colonies where possible.
- Minimise the risks of spreading the non-native species and crayfish plague.

Target areas for habitat management and creation

- Huddersfield Narrow Canal and ponds along the Colne and Holme Valley.
- Ponds remote from existing river catchments (ARC sites) which offer the potential for an introduction programme as a refuge site.

Targets

- Establish new colony in refuge site by 2011.

Key Links and Organisations

- Site protection: Kirklees Council; Natural England.
- Management and restoration: British Waterways, River Colne Project.
- Monitoring: British Waterways; River Colne Project.

See Also

- [UKBAP White-clawed Crayfish Species Action Plan](#)
- See also Kirklees Habitat Action Plan: Rivers, Riverine Corridors and Associated Habitats and Floating Water Plantain (available at www.kirklees.gov.uk/biodiversity)