



The Handling of Crayfish by Riverfly Monitors in England

It is the policy of the Riverfly Partnership to establish best practice when Riverfly Monitors use a 3 minute kick sample to survey rivers as part of the Anglers' Riverfly Monitoring Initiative (**ARMI**) (8 target invertebrate groups), the Urban Riverfly Scheme (14 target invertebrate groups), or the Extended Riverfly Scheme (33 target invertebrate groups).

In the course of sampling, crayfish (native and non-native) may be unintentionally caught. Instruction on correct crayfish species identification and handling, together with emphasis on maintaining biosecurity, will, in accordance with this policy, be covered during official ARMI and Extended Riverfly training events. **It must be emphasised that the major threat to native crayfish follows the introduction of crayfish disease through failure to observe the basic rules of biosecurity when moving between sites within a waterbody or between waterbodies. Check, Clean, Dry protocols should be observed at all times (please visit the Non Native Species Secretariat website (listed below) for more information and free to download resources).**

This document is an attempt to offer advice on appropriate management of crayfish when caught inadvertently. Statute law governs the handling of native crayfish (the White-clawed Crayfish) as well as the non-native species (including the American Signal Crayfish), both through defining legal activities and offences, and by the issue of different licences (the Environment Agency and Natural England may authorise the **intentional** handling of crayfish).

For identification, please refer to the Non Native Species Secretariat website (listed below). In determining the species of crayfish, size is not necessarily indicative: big crayfish may indeed be native, and small may be non-native.

Offences

- 1. Intentional Act.** Under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, it is an offence **intentionally** to take a White-clawed Crayfish from the wild but **it is not** an offence to disturb, kill or injure a White-clawed Crayfish.
- 2. Inadvertent Act.** Under Section 10(3) c of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 **it is not** an offence to take or kill crayfish if the action was an incidental result to a lawful operation and could not reasonably have been avoided. Our understanding is that kick sampling, when the sample is returned to the river, may be regarded as a lawful operation.
- 3.** Under Section 14 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 it is an offence to release non-native crayfish. Therefore if non-native crayfish are caught and correctly identified they must be destroyed rather than released.

The Requirement for a Licence

4. Under section 27 of the Salmon and Freshwater Fisheries Act 1975, authorisation for fishing with 'any means other than a licensable instrument' (for example, a rod and line) must be sought from the Environment Agency. This includes the intentional fishing, or 'handpicking' of crayfish but **inadvertent** catching of crayfish during the kick sample does not come within the terms of this requirement: **a licence is, therefore, not needed.**
5. Under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, intentional removal of a White Clawed Crayfish for its protection, as for instance, during translocation, requires a '**Conservation Licence**' issue by Natural England.
6. Under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, intentional surveying of a waterbody for the presence or absence of White Clawed Crayfish requires a '**Science and Education Licence**' issued by Natural England.

Conclusion

- Providing a Riverfly Monitor does not **intentionally** seek to catch native crayfish and he/she returns any native crayfish to the waterbody of origin, no offence has been committed.
- If a Riverfly Monitor catches a non-native crayfish, identifies it as such and releases the animal to the wild, he /she commits an offence.
- It is illegal to transport live signal crayfish: as noted at para 1, it is also an offence intentionally to take a White-clawed crayfish from the wild.
- No licence is required by River Monitors using a kick sample solely for the purpose of sampling according to Riverfly methodology.

Further Information

- Identification guides can be downloaded from the GB Non-native Species Secretariat website: <http://www.nonnativespecies.org/index.cfm?sectionid=47>.
- Further species information on crayfish may be obtained at: <http://www.nonnativespecies.org/factsheet/index.cfm?query=crayfish>
- Advice on matters of biosecurity may be obtained at <http://www.nonnativespecies.org//checkcleandry/index.cfm?>