

Rusty crayfish (*Orconectes rusticus*)

What do rusty crayfish look like?

Adults are generally 3-5 inches long (excluding claws) and have rust-colored spots on their sides. Their claws are typically larger and smoother than many other crayfish. They also tend to have an oval gap when closed.



Matt Sell; <http://www.mdinvasivesp.org/>

Where do rusty crayfish live?

Rusty crayfish (*Orconectes rusticus*) are native to streams in the Ohio River Basin states of Ohio, Kentucky, Illinois, Indiana, and Tennessee. Although native to parts of north-central Kentucky, rusty crayfish have become a problem in eastern Kentucky. Native species which exhibit invasive characteristics when transported to areas outside their native range are known as “native-invasives.”

How did rusty crayfish spread outside its native range?

Rusty crayfish are sold as bait and by biological supply companies, and are often introduced into new water bodies via “bait bucket release” and release into the wild by aquarium hobbyists or teachers who were keeping them as study specimens.

How do rusty crayfish spread?

Because they are prolific reproducers, with females laying from 80-575 eggs, they can spread quickly once introduced.

Why is rusty crayfish a problem?

Rusty crayfish eat small fish, insects, and fish eggs. They also eat aquatic vegetation, damaging underwater habitat that is important for fish spawning, cover, and food. They are more aggressive than other crayfish and better able to avoid fish predation, allowing them to displace native crayfish.

How can you help to prevent their spread?

- Do not release live crayfish (or any other plants or animals) into waters of the state.
- Do not fish with live crayfish.
- Always dispose of unused live bait in the trash, not in the water.