

# CRAYFISH

## IDENTIFY AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES

*Working together in Michigan for healthy waters*



## WHAT'S THE PROBLEM?

Crayfish are popular aquarium pets and used frequently in classrooms. Well-meaning people sometimes release unwanted non-native crayfish into waterbodies, and they become invasive and harmful to our environment. They rapidly reproduce, outcompeting our native species for food and habitat. Some invasive crayfish make deep burrows, causing damage to infrastructure and excessive erosion. It is expensive to manage invasive crayfish once they are established in a waterway and eradicating them is challenging.

Do not release unwanted crayfish into Michigan waterways. Euthanize crayfish by placing them in a freezer, where they will pass in their rest state.

## REPORT INVADERS

Suspected invasive crayfish in shipments or available for sale should be reported to the Michigan Department of Natural Resources immediately: [800-292-7800](tel:800-292-7800)

Report invasive species found in the wild to the Midwest Invasive Species Information Network: [misin.msu.edu](http://misin.msu.edu)

The list of state-regulated species is regularly updated. For the latest information: [Michigan.gov/Invasives](http://Michigan.gov/Invasives)

Multiple, high resolution photographs should be included with invasive species reports to ensure accurate identification.



## DON'T LET IT LOOSE

Protect our waterways by following a few simple steps:

**Never release aquarium or water garden plants or animals into local waterways.**

**Give or trade unwanted fish or plants with another hobbyist, environmental learning center, aquarium or zoo.**

**Euthanize unwanted crayfish by placing them in a freezer. Contact a veterinarian or pet retailer for additional guidance on humane disposal.**

**Dispose of aquatic plants by sealing them in a plastic bag and placing them in the trash. Do not compost.**

**Inspect and rinse new aquatic plants for aquariums or water gardens to rid them of seeds, plant fragments, snails and fish.**

**Build water gardens well away from other waters.**

For more information on how to reduce invasive pet and plant escapes, visit [canr.msu.edu/ripple](http://canr.msu.edu/ripple)

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GET TO KNOW

# THE INVADERS

## REGULATED CRAYFISH SPECIES

Certain crayfish species cannot be sold alive in Michigan due to their invasive potential. If they were to be released into the wild they could have devastating consequences on our aquatic ecosystems.

Michigan laws regulate the possession and sale of live crayfish species listed as prohibited or restricted in Part 413 of the Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act or the Invasive Species Order Amendment No. 1 of 2020. Red swamp crayfish, yabby crayfish and marbled crayfish are listed as prohibited species in Michigan, meaning they cannot be possessed, sold, imported, introduced, or transported live. Rusty crayfish, which are restricted in the state, may be harvested for personal consumption; however, they are illegal to commercially take, possess or sell. Invasive crayfish may not be used for bait, whether alive or dead, on any private or public waters.

Prohibited or restricted crayfish could be sold unintentionally by wholesalers or retailers if they are misidentified or mislabeled. Crayfish are notoriously difficult to identify and distinguishing them from unregulated crayfish species takes practice.



**Marbled crayfish** | *Procambarus fallax f. virginalis*

- Distinct marbled color pattern especially noticeable on the head.
- Relatively small, narrow claws usually less than half the length of the head.
- Generally olive-colored to dark brown but can be bred in an array of colors including blue and red.
- Capable of self cloning.



**Yabby crayfish** | *Cherax destructor*

- Head is smooth, with four ridges extending from above the eyes to the back of the head segment.
- Colors vary widely. Commonly green-beige to black or blue-gray, with a dirty-white to gray belly. Bright blue coloration is popular in the aquarium trade.

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**Red swamp crayfish** | *Procambarus clarkii*

- Small, red bumps on sides of body and tops of claws.
- Back plates join or touch in the middle.
- Claws are long and thin compared to other species.
- Dark, v-shaped stripe down the underside of the tail.
- In the wild, coloring ranges from crimson to olive, brown or black. When bred for aquariums, coloring can be bright blue, white, candy cane or other unique colors and patterns.



**Rusty crayfish** | *Faxonius rusticus*

- Body color is light tan to dark green with rusty, red spots on each side of the back plates.
- Claws have black bands and red or orange tips.
- When closed, the claws have an oval gap in the middle.
- Back plates do not join or touch in the middle.