



## rusty crayfish

*Orconectes rusticus*

Kingdom:	Animalia
Division/Phylum:	Arthropoda
Class:	Malacostraca
Order:	Decapoda

### Features

The rusty crayfish is greenish-brown to brownish-red on the upper side of the body. Single, brown spots are located on each side near the middle of the animal. The large, robust claws are fairly smooth and gray-green to reddish-brown in color with a black band at the tip. Adults may be four inches long, not including claws.

### Natural History

The rusty crayfish lives in creeks, rivers, and lakes with rock or gravel bottoms. It hunts aggressively for food, eating mainly plants and dead organisms. It reaches maturity at about 15 months of age. It lives three to four years. Mating occurs in the fall with egg-laying in late spring. The number of eggs produced is dependent on the body size of the female, ranging from 50 to 350. Eggs hatch in May after being carried under the female's tail for about four to six weeks. It overwinters in burrows it constructs in streambanks or in other places in the ground. It may out-compete smaller, less aggressive native crayfish.

### Habitats

Mississippi River; Missouri River; interior rivers and streams; natural lakes and prairie marshes; constructed lakes, ponds, and reservoirs

### Iowa Status

common; exotic

### Iowa Range

northern half of Iowa and scattered in southern Iowa in suitable habitats

### Bibliography

Iowa Department of Natural Resources. 2001. *Biodiversity of Iowa: Aquatic Habitats* CD-ROM.