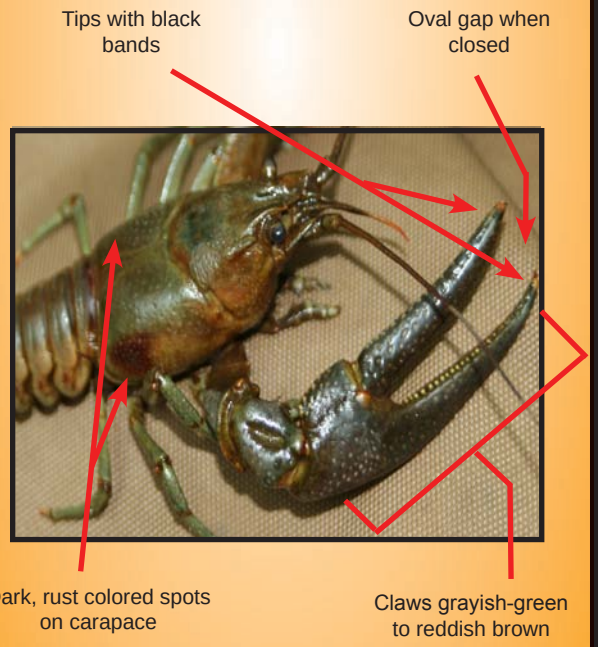
What does the rusty crayfish look like?

Several characteristics can help distinguish the rusty crayfish from other crayfish species. Rusty crayfish will typically have rust-colored spots on either side of the body just in front of the abdomen (tail). The claws of the rusty crayfish tend to be larger, more robust, and more smooth (with few or no wart-like bumps) in comparison to native species. These claws are grayish-green to reddish-brown and have black bands on the tips. An oval gap is formed when both fingers of the claw are closed.



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Invasion of the Rusty Crayfish

A Bait Bucket Introduction of a Destructive Species

MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

MARYLAND BIOLOGICAL STREAM SURVEY

The rusty crayfish (*Orconectes rusticus*), an aggressive, non-native, and invasive species, was first discovered in the Monocacy River in north-central Maryland on June 28th, 2007. It was later discovered in Maryland's portion of the Susquehanna River watershed. This species in Maryland has generated concern about its potential effects on other native crayfish, desirable sportfish, and other aquatic organisms.

Over 800 rusty crayfish were caught in 75 meters of the Monocacy River.

What is the Rusty Crayfish?

The rusty crayfish is native to portions of the Ohio River watershed in Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Ohio, and Tennessee. It grows quickly and can reach a length of five inches. In its native range, it is commonly found in lakes, ponds, and streams and can inhabit shallow riffles or deep pools.

Why is the rusty crayfish such a concern?

The rusty crayfish has invaded 14 other states and portions of Canada where it has devastated local aquatic ecosystems. Invasions of this species have resulted in the loss of native crayfish. They are known to feed upon fish eggs and can reduce the quality of habitat available to many fishes and other invertebrates. Rusty crayfish also feed on freshwater mussels, 70% of which are threatened or endangered.

How did the rusty crayfish find its way to Maryland?

Crayfish are popular as bait for game fish. Anglers may have unintentionally introduced rusty crayfish into the Monocacy and Susquehanna River watersheds in either Maryland or Pennsylvania.

How can you help prevent the further spread of the rusty crayfish and other aquatic invasive species?

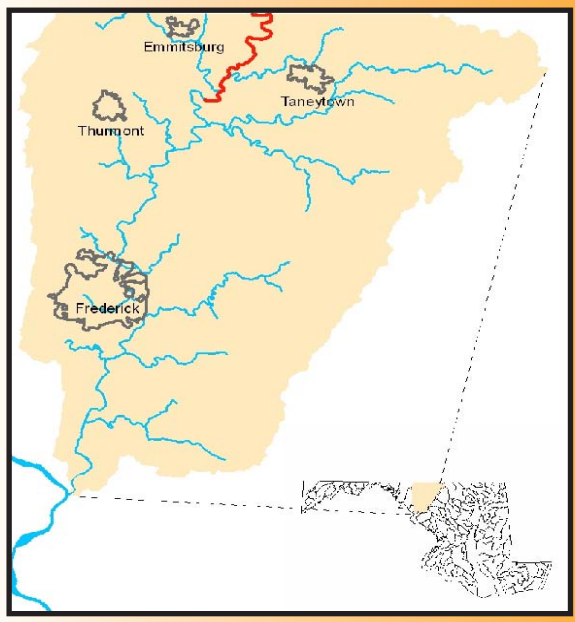
- Learn to identify rusty crayfish
- Never release live unused bait
- Do not transport live fish or crayfish from one body of water to another

Rusty crayfish cannot legally be imported, transported, purchased, possessed live, propagated, sold, or released into Maryland water. If you find a rusty crayfish, freeze the specimen (or take several pictures), note the exact location, and call the Maryland DNR invasive species hotline at 1-877-620-8DNR. For more information on invasive crayfish and other problematic species, visit the MDNR website:
www.dnr.state.md.us/invasives

What does the Maryland Department of Natural Resources plan to do?

The complete distribution of rusty crayfish in the Monocacy River watershed is unclear at this time. It has been found in the northern portion of the Monocacy River main-stem. In Fall of 2007, the Maryland Department of Natural Resources began a multi-year study to survey the Monocacy River for rusty crayfish. This study will:

1.) Determine the extent to which this species has become established in the Monocacy River and its major tributaries;
2.) Determine the potential for population control of this invasive species;
3.) Determine the effects this species has on other native stream species.



Current distribution (highlighted in red) of rusty crayfish in the northern portion of the Monocacy River watershed.