



Red Swamp Crawfish

Crawfish

(*Procambarus spp.*)



Crawfish are freshwater crustaceans found worldwide, except in most tropical regions. In the United States there are 330 known crawfish species, 39 of which can be found in Louisiana. Only two Louisiana crawfish species are targeted for commercial harvest, the red swamp crawfish and the southern white river crawfish.



© Dawn Witherington

Red Swamp Crawfish (*Procambarus clarkii*)

The red swamp crawfish is the primary commercial species and perhaps the most easily recognized Louisiana crawfish, making up 70-80% of our state's annual catch. Like its name implies, they prefer swampy habitats. Their native range is northeastern Mexico and south-central United States, although they have been introduced to many other countries.



Southern White River Crawfish (*Procambarus zonangulus*)

The southern white river crawfish makes up 20-30% of our state's annual crawfish catch. They prefer flooded wetland habitats with periodically flowing, well-oxygenated water. Their native range is Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama, and they only occur in the United States.

Spawning Season

Length of day, water temperature, and changes in water level trigger the mating season for Louisiana crawfish species. Females must be slightly soft to mate, usually a few days after molting. Female crawfish mate in open water with males before moving into burrows to spawn. Fertilized eggs are attached under the tail and are carried for two to eight weeks before hatching. Larval crawfish remain on the female for one to three weeks until she leaves the burrow.

Habitat

Crawfish are found in burrows, ditches, rivers, lakes, and streams. Louisiana's commercial crawfish species retreat to burrows when surface waters dry up. These are simple, shallow burrows, less than 40 inches deep. More complex burrows tend to have large chimneys of rounded mudballs capping the entrance, often up to a foot high.

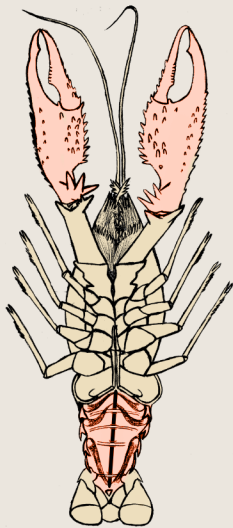
Diet

Crawfish are opportunistic omnivores that eat almost anything. They can detect small amounts of blood and decomposition chemicals in the water. They feed on partially decomposed plant material, living soft plants, scavenge on any type of animal meat, and are often cannibalistic.

Age and Growth

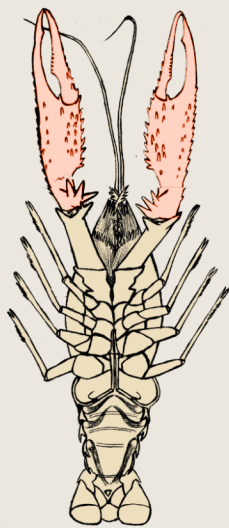
Crawfish grow by molting, a process in which a new shell forms and causes the outer shell to shed. Molting occurs at night in a protected area away from predators because the new shell is soft, leaving the crawfish vulnerable for several days until the new shell hardens. Juvenile crawfish molt as often as once a week during their first few months, but less often as they mature. Crawfish reach maturity at an age of two months to one year and can live up to three years of age.

Identification



Red Swamp Crawfish

- Brown to bright red in color
- Blackish-brown stripe down the abdomen
- More flattened claws



Southern White River Crawfish

- Various shades of brown in color
- No stripe down the abdomen
- More elongated claws



Your purchase of fishing equipment and motor boat fuels supports Sport Fish Restoration and boating access facilities.

Louisiana Department of
Wildlife and Fisheries
Office of Fisheries
2000 Quail Drive
Baton Rouge, LA 70808
225-765-2800
www.wlf.louisiana.gov

For more information on crawfish:
Brian Alford
225-765-2332

This public document was published at a total cost of \$344.60. Five hundred copies of this public document were published and partially paid for by a Federal Aid in Sportfish Restoration Grant (F-136) from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in this first printing at a cost of \$344.60. This document was published by the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, 2000 Quail Drive, Baton Rouge, LA 70808, to inform Louisiana residents and non-residents about the Sport Fish Restoration Program. This material was printed in accordance with standards for printing by state agencies.

Crawfish Quick Facts

There are five species of crawfish that occur only in Louisiana:

- Teche Painted Crawfish
- Calcasieu Painted Crawfish
- Ouachita Fencing Crawfish
- Caddo Chimney Crawfish
- Calcasieu Creek Crawfish

Some types of crawfish can burrow over six feet deep.

At least 80% of all crawfish produced in Louisiana are consumed in the state.

Louisiana has more than 1,000 crawfish farmers and over 800 commercial fishermen who catch wild crawfish.

Over 110 million pounds of crawfish are harvested each year in Louisiana, with an economic impact of 120 million dollars.

Crawfish Pond Culture

In 2010, pond-raised crawfish accounted for nearly 87% of Louisiana crawfish production. Crawfish can be raised in dedicated artificial ponds, but generally crawfish pond culture involves alternating rice with crawfish and sometimes soybeans. This multiple crop scheme is more profitable, requiring less energy to run pumps and control water levels.

