

## White-clawed Crayfish (*Austropotamobius pallipes*)

The white-clawed crayfish is the UK's only native freshwater crayfish species and is widespread in clean, calcareous streams, rivers and lakes. It is relatively small, with a body length of about 12cm, and docile crayfish species. Its body is generally brown to olive in colour, and its claws have a dirty white to pink underside. Crayfish are confined to watercourse corridors, and will therefore only be found within the Highway Agency's soft estate where roads cross or run adjacent to watercourses.

The UKBAP priority habitats of particular importance to this species are: chalk rivers, eutrophic standing waters, and mesotrophic lakes.

### Current status

#### National status

The species is listed in Appendix III of the Bern Convention and Annexes II and V of the EC Habitats Directive, and is classed as globally threatened by IUCN/WCMC. It is protected under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and is a UKBAP Priority Species. Sites can be designated as SACs for this species under the EC Habitats Directive.

White-clawed crayfish are widely distributed over much of the country. The species is still relatively abundant in some areas of central and northern England, and is particularly scarce in southern England. The south-west has no records further west than east Devon.

#### Status on the network

White-clawed crayfish are present in all areas of the network, although there are no references to them in the Highways Agency network ecological information.

### Current factors affecting the species

#### General

The white-clawed crayfish is threatened by competition and disease from non-native crayfish, habitat modification, inappropriate management of waterbodies, and by pollution.

#### Loss and deterioration of habitat

New road developments and road improvement schemes may lead to the loss of bankside features which provide shelter for crayfish, such as tree roots, and crevices below the waterline in old stone and brickwork. This is particularly likely where bridge construction, repair of old bridges or bank stabilisation work is required.

#### Pollution

Roads can also cause the pollution of watercourses, through run-off which may lead to the direct loss of animals, or sediment release from new road developments, which may cause the loss of suitable habitat.

### Current action

Best practice guidelines for work affecting white-clawed crayfish are provided in the English Nature/Environment Agency publication "*Guidance on works affecting white-clawed crayfish*". White-clawed crayfish surveys are carried out as part of the Environmental Assessment process for any proposed new scheme, and thus avoidance or mitigation can be proposed at the earliest possible stage.



## Objectives

The main aim of the Highways Agency Species Action Plan for the white-clawed crayfish is to ensure that new road developments avoid or

adequately mitigate any potential impacts on the species.

	Objective	Proposed actions
A	To avoid impacts of new road schemes or improvements on white-clawed crayfish.	4
B	To mitigate unavoidable impacts on white-clawed crayfish and/or their habitats.	5
C	To safeguard and enhance known white-clawed crayfish populations close to the road network.	3, 6
D	To raise the awareness of HA staff, Managing Agents and consultants regarding the significance of white-clawed crayfish on the network.	1, 2, 7
E	To safeguard and enhance potentially suitable habitat features for white-clawed crayfish within the soft estate and wetland habitats downstream of road crossings.	2
F	To develop a greater knowledge of the distribution of white-clawed crayfish on the soft estate.	3

## Proposed action

The following table lists the actions required to achieve the objectives set out in this Plan. For some of the actions, potential partners have

been assigned as likely sources of cooperation. Targets are provided to give an indication of the timescale for the proposed action.

	Action	Potential partners	Target
	<i>Policy, guidance and advice</i>		
1	Publish an Advice Note on white-clawed crayfish in the DMRB.	EA	2003
2	Provide detailed information in TRMM on the management of watercourses for the benefit of white-clawed crayfish.	EA	By 2005
	<i>Survey</i>		
3	Identify all areas on the network likely to be used by white-clawed crayfish. Include all records on Environmental Database.	-	2006
	<i>Mitigation and Management</i>		
4	For all new road schemes and road improvements, include search for records of white-clawed crayfish in desk study at stage 1 and in surveys at stage 2. Early identification of this constraint may allow impacts to be avoided.	-	Ongoing

	<i>Action (continued)</i>	Potential partners	Target
	<i>Mitigation and Management (continued)</i>		
5	Where impacts of new schemes and road improvements on white-clawed crayfish habitat are unavoidable, consider the options for habitat recreation and enhancement.	-	Ongoing
6	Ensure that best practice is employed in the management of the soft estate where white-clawed crayfish are known to be present.	-	Ongoing
	<i>Communications and publicity</i>		
7	Information on white-clawed crayfish should be included in environmental training for HA staff and Managing Agents.	-	From 2002

### Links with other plans

This plan should be read in conjunction with the HAP for water features.

White-clawed crayfish is listed as a Priority Species in 26 LBAPS, many of which cite the UKBAP's action plan for white-clawed crayfish.

### Lead partner

The lead partner for the white-clawed crayfish in the UKBAP is the Environment Agency.

