

Brief Guide to Crayfish Identification in the Pacific Northwest

December 2009

Signal crayfish (*Pacifasticus leniusculus*)

Washington has only one native crayfish species, the signal crayfish. It is fairly easily identified by its uniform brownish or blue-tinged coloration as adults with a white band at the joint of the claws (chelae). Juveniles of the signal crayfish will likely be drab brown with the white band less noticeable. It is also quite smooth on all its surfaces compared to other crayfish, especially the claw.



Red swamp crayfish (*Procambarus clarkii*)

The invasive red swamp crayfish will be red as adults with longer, narrower claws than the signal crayfish. Additionally, red swamp crayfish claws will be covered with red, white or black bumps (tubercles). Red swamp juveniles will be brown but with a body shape and pattern similar to adults, including a black “V” pattern on the dorsal side of the tail (abdomen) and a salt and pepper pattern of spotting in black, grey, white or red over the carapace.





SIGNAL CRAYFISH

RED SWAMP CRAYFISH

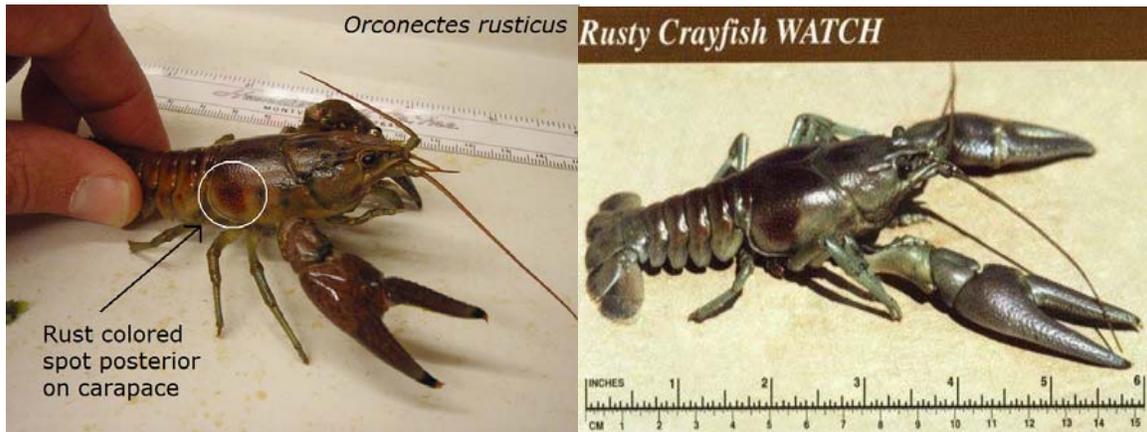
Northern crayfish (*Orconectes virilis*)

The northern crayfish is a medium to large crayfish and is distinguished from signal and red swamp crayfish by broad flattened tuberculate (i.e., large tubercles) claws, and a olive-brown body that is dappled with dark brown, and abdominal segments with dark brown medial spots.



Rusty crayfish (*Orconectes rusticus*)

The invasive rusty crayfish, a major nuisance species in the midwest United States and elsewhere, was recently found in the John Day River of Oregon (Olden et al. 2009). The species is not yet known from other sites in the Pacific Northwest. Rusty crayfish may be best identified by the rust colored spot on each side of the carapace near the joint with the abdomen (see figures). Rusty crayfish also frequently have black tips to their claws. Rusty crayfish belong to the same genus as *Orconectes virilis*, but their claws are generally smoother – although may still have tubercles/bumps in contrast to the native signal crayfish.



Crayfish that do not conform to these descriptions could be other species such as the ringed crayfish *Orconectes neglectus* or the white river crayfish *Procambarus acutus*.

PLEASE PHOTOGRAPH ANY CRAYFISH THAT YOU ARE NOT ABLE TO IDENTIFY.

PLEASE KEEP VOUCHER SPECIMENS OF ANY NON-NATIVE CRAYFISH (deposit in ethanol).

Getting Your Specimens to the University of Washington

Once you have collected some nonnative specimens, I'd like to make arrangements to get them to UW. Please give me a call:

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