

PREDATION: CRAYFISH



A voracious predator mopping up fish spawn and demolishing invertebrate populations.



ANGLING TRUST
POSITION STATEMENT
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Background

Whilst predation is part and parcel of the natural world there is no doubt that any imbalance between predator and prey can have a serious long-term effect on fish stocks. Particularly when those stocks are already under severe pressure from other factors including pollution, over-abstraction of water and loss of habitat. The three most damaging predators impacting on our freshwater fish populations are cormorants, signal crayfish and otters.

Here we look at the impact of signal crayfish.



Why it matters

The American Signal Crayfish was introduced for food in the UK in the late 1970s and 1980s but spread quickly across much of England with damaging results. Distribution in Scotland and Wales is limited. It is a voracious predator mopping up fish spawn and demolishing invertebrate populations. They are thought to cause particular problems to spring gravel spawning species such as chub, dace and barbel.

Signal crayfish spread up and downstream and may cross land to colonise adjacent water bodies. Human transfer, although illegal, continues. Negative impacts include the almost complete loss of the native crayfish through the spread of disease and direct competition. Signal crayfish can undermine riverbanks through burrowing.

Signal crayfish are listed under Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 as an Invasive Non-Native Species, (Enforcement and Permitting Order 2019) which make it an offence to release or to allow the escape of this species into the wild. In the UK it is an offence to keep any crayfish without a licence.

If the trapping of signal crayfish is planned, an application should be made to the relevant environmental protection agency. Since 2019, all signal crayfish that have been caught in a trap must be removed and killed at the site of capture unless under a management licence. Under the management licence, live animals may be transferred away from the site, but only to licensed processing facilities.

What is the Angling Trust doing?

The Angling Trust has produced a series of advice and information around the identification, management, and removal of signal crayfish (as part of our broader advice on a range of invasive non-native species). These can be viewed on the Invasive Non-Native Species section of our website. We regularly hold training and information workshops for clubs and fisheries, both online and via our regional forums.

The Angling Trust is calling for a national strategy on signal crayfish which brings together the advances that have been made on crayfish control and, crucially, outlines an approach to effectively coordinate management at a catchment level. We voiced the need for this catchment-based approach in the ‘Management measures for widespread invasive alien species’ consultation in 2019 and during the Environment Audit Committee Inquiry in the same year.

The Angling Trust has been successful in lobbying for a floating pennywort strategy and we believe a similar strategy should be developed for signal crayfish to ensure effective long-term control. The Angling Trust sit on several national working groups on invasive species and continue to push for this strategy to be produced. We have continued to support the exploration into different management options including the use of male sterilisation as an effective management approach.

How can you help?

By joining the Angling Trust, you can support our work on the management and removal of signal crayfish, as part of our broader work on invasive non-native species.

It is important to ensure you take action to protect biosecurity and follow the advice given as part of the Check, Clean, Dry code.

CHECK your gear after leaving the water for mud, aquatic animals, or plant material. Remove anything you find and leave it at the site.

CLEAN everything thoroughly as soon as you can, paying attention to nets, waders, and areas that are damp and hard to access. Use hot water if possible.

DRY everything for as long as possible before using it elsewhere as some invasive plants and animals can survive for two weeks in damp conditions.

Thank You!

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ANGLING TRUST

We are a not-for-profit organisation representing anglers, fighting for fish, fishing and the environment. We are recognised by the Government as the National Governing Body for angling in England and partner with Visit Wales and Natural Resources Wales to promote Fishing in Wales. We are a member-based organisation made up of anglers of all disciplines providing a united front to represent, grow and protect our sport. By becoming a member of the Angling Trust you are helping to protect the waterways you fish in and the fish which live within them, ensuring their health and protection for future generations.

[Click here for more information about how to join the Angling Trust](#)

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