

## — CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT AND LEGISLATION THE UK EXPERIENCE —



Underpinning the conservation management of *Austropotamobius pallipes* in the UK is the process of monitoring and reporting crayfish distribution. Should the current trend in the decline of *A. pallipes* continue, the species could be virtually extinct in mainland Britain within 30 years (SIBLEY, 2003). Conversely, if the increase in the distribution of non-indigenous crayfish species (NICS) continues at its current rate, the distribution (by 10 km squares) of these species could double within 15 years. These forward projections are based on a number of possibly unreliable assumptions; they illustrate however the magnitude of the challenge facing those concerned with the conservation of *A. pallipes* in the UK at this time. Recent work in crayfish conservation management in the UK has yielded guidance in several areas including monitoring, habitat enhancement and a re-introduction protocol for *A. pallipes* (KEMP and HILEY, 2003). Similarly, scientific research continues to inform our understanding of the movement and behaviour of NICS and explores new methods for the potential management of these species. In addition, the protection afforded to *A. pallipes* by current legislation is key to the long-term survival prospects of the species, albeit with a probable fragmented

distribution, across the British Isles and continental Europe. Legal provisions in the UK derive in part from European instructions (e.g. EC Habitats and Species Directive) and also from national legislation (e.g. Salmon and Freshwater Fisheries Act (1975) and the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981)). Also, a raft of "quasi-legislation" exists which requires responsible organisations in the UK to implement the white-clawed crayfish biodiversity action plan (BAP). Altogether these provisions constitute a considerable volume of legal protection for crayfish and provide the legal framework on which UK management policy and practice are based.

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