

ROUNDTABLE SESSION 4: THE IMPORTANCE OF PUBLIC EDUCATION FOR THE EFFECTIVE CONSERVATION OF EUROPEAN NATIVE CRAYFISH



Most current approaches to conservation focus on wide dissemination of information to the public. However, specific educational programmes are mostly lacking for *Austropotamobius torrentium*, which occurs in at least 19 countries of central and Eastern Europe and is often found outside Natura 2000 protected sites. A coordinated series of regional leaflets on its biology, role as environmental indicator and heritage importance is needed. A questionnaire on public awareness of crayfish across Europe showed major regional differences. Scandinavian countries, where crayfish are important economically and socially, generally showed greatest public awareness, reinforced by easily available documentation. Elsewhere, availability of information is patchy or non-existent. To generate awareness and help counter loss of native stocks, basic information should be accurate and widely available across Europe, both for decision makers and the general public.

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Obtenir le document : EDP Sciences

Mots clés : crayfish, *Austropotamobius torrentium*, education, information, conservation, écrevisses, *Austropotamobius torrentium*, éducation, information, conservation

Thème (issu du Text Mining) : MILIEU NATUREL, INFORMATION - INFORMATIQUE

Date : 2008-04-01

Format : text/xml

Source : <https://doi.org/10.1051/kmae:2005036>

Langue : Anglais

Télécharger les documents : <https://www.kmae-journal.org/10.1051/kmae:2005036/pdf>

Permalien : <https://www.documentation.eauetbiodiversite.fr/notice/roundtable-session-4-the-importance-of-public-education-for-the-effective-conservation-of-european-n0>

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