

THE FRESHWATER CRAYFISH AUSTROPOTAMOBIOUS PALLIPESIN SOUTH TYROL: HERITAGE SPECIES AND BIOINDICATOR



Rapid decline of crayfish in European freshwaters and continuing threat necessitate integrated actions in conservation and management of native crayfish populations. Besides biological reasons (diseases, plague), the impact of toxic and harmful substances (fertilisers, herbicides) or wastewater effluents, habitat alteration or fragmentation have been responsible for their decline in some regions. The same is true for the region of South Tyrol, where compared to previous investigations, only 10 of a former total of 15 crayfish locations in the water bodies could be affirmed. Although two new populations of the non-indigenous *Astacus astacus* were detected, the native *Austropotamobius pallipes* continues to decline. While many investigations have focused accurately on causal coherences for the decline of native populations, the properties of crayfish facilitate to reverse the situation. In a few examples, the potential of *Austropotamobius pallipes*, the native crayfish in South Tyrol, as "surrogate species" for effective biological conservation is discussed. Given the various adequate attributes of freshwater crayfish as surrogate species (including indicator species, umbrella species and flagship species qualities), they may help to advance not only the crayfish

situation itself but also freshwater ecosystem properties in general.

Auteurs du document : L. FÜREDER, B. OBERKOFER, R. HANEL, J. LEITER, B. THALER

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