

Habitat use and population structure of the invasive red swamp crayfish



The red swamp crayfish *Procambarus clarkii* is one of the most invasive alien species in Europe and included in the list of invasive species of Union concern. We describe for the first time some life-history traits of a red swamp crayfish population in the Nature Reserve of the Lago di Candia (Italy). We investigated (1) preferences of this species for specific environmental features on the banks of the lake, and (2) differences in size, sex ratio, and condition index between individuals caught in lake and marsh. Moreover, we compared sampling effort and the features of individuals caught in the lake, for two sampling seasons in 2014 and 2015. Findings indicated that the population was well established, and the marsh seemed to have better conditions for growth of individuals than the lake. Accordingly, continuity of riparian vegetation, opportunity to dig burrows, and trophic resource availability seems to facilitate the proliferation of the crayfish in the lake. Our study demonstrated that massive removal efforts over the whole active period of the species and more than one year of trapping are necessary to increase the controlling activities' success.

This study could have important implications for further population management projects directed at biodiversity conservation in the area.

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