

Present distribution and future spread of louisiana red swamp crayfish



The Louisiana red swamp crayfish *Procambarus clarkii* is highly invasive. It is now common in Europe where it is causing problems to native wildlife and structural damage to habitats. *Procambarus clarkii* was first recorded in Britain in 1991 and is currently found in the Hampstead Heath ponds and Regents Canal in London, as well as a small lake 15 km outside of Greater London. This paper considers how conditions in Britain affect the life cycle, breeding habits and potential range expansion of *P. clarkii*. Results of trapping surveys are presented in an effort to map the current distribution of *P. clarkii* and predict which areas it could colonise in the future. The ecological impact of potential colonisation is discussed by considering the impact *P. clarkii* has in mainland Europe. It is concluded that *P. clarkii* is likely to spread from Regents Canal into the nearby Brent, Crane, Colne, Lee and Thames catchments within 50 years. This time would be reduced significantly if further deliberate or accidental introductions by humans occur since this is deemed a far greater risk than natural expansion. *P. clarkii* is expected to have a negative impact on aquatic ecosystems in Britain and therefore tighter enforcement is needed to slow the spread of this species.

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