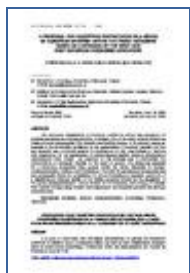


A PROPOSAL FOR ACCEPTING PONTASTACUS AS A GENUS OF EUROPEAN CRAYFISH WITHIN THE FAMILY ASTACIDAE BASED ON A REVISION OF THE WEST AND EAST EUROPEAN TAXONOMIC LITERATURE



The taxonomic classification of European crayfish is neither fully examined nor generally accepted as a unifying scheme. At present, one of the most obvious differences exists between astacologists from Western and Eastern Europe. In the present paper, an analysis of the information published on the systematics of European crayfish over the last decades was conducted against the background of own observations on features with importance for the systematics of narrow-clawed crayfish (*Astacus* (*Pontastacus*) *leptodactylus*) from Poland. The objective of this analysis was to standardize the nomenclature of European crayfish at the level of genera. The presented proposal for a taxonomy recognizes three genera within the family Astacidae in Europe: *Austropotamobius*, *Astacus*, and *Pontastacus*. The main (morphological, zoogeographical and ecological) criteria for considering the genus *Pontastacus* a separate genus are of a discriminatory strength similar to the widely accepted criteria for the separation of the genus *Austropotamobius*. Further studies on the taxonomy and ecology of crayfish from eastern Europe using modern techniques such as molecular genetics are strongly recommended.

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