

Press release: Nottinghamshire project to protect native white-clawed crayfish

An Environment Agency partnership project to conserve native white-clawed crayfish in Nottinghamshire is now in its third year.

The Signal Crayfish Control Project, led by the Nottinghamshire Biodiversity Action Group, hopes to build on the success of the past two years, to support recovery of white-clawed crayfish in Nottinghamshire.

Native white-clawed crayfish have been in decline since non-native American signal crayfish escaped into UK waters in the 1970s. These larger, invasive crayfish outcompete native species for food and habitat and carry a disease fatal to the UK species.

Peter Haynes, Biodiversity Officer at the Environment Agency in the East Midlands said:

Last year the project in Nottinghamshire saw the capture of 5,702 signal crayfish, which followed on from the capture of 7,800 signal crayfish in the previous year. This is a great result and after two years there are indications that the numbers and size of the non-native crayfish are reducing, which is a real positive.

We have been working with the Nottinghamshire Biodiversity Action Group and Nottinghamshire City Council and, most importantly, an army of volunteers to control the invasive signal crayfish in west Nottinghamshire.

Whilst we are encouraged by the signs of change, we still have a long way to go until we are satisfied our native crayfish populations are protected. We are also looking at creating 'ark' havens for the white-clawed crayfish to secure their future by relocating them to areas free from the invaders.

White-clawed crayfish, named for the pale colour of the underside of their claws, are the country's largest native freshwater crustaceans. Generally growing to 30 – 40mm in length, some can live up to 12 years and reach 120mm long from tip to tail.

Invasive species pose a serious threat to our native wildlife and cost the UK economy £1.8 billion a year. Everyone can do their part to prevent the spread of invasive species and protect native ones by taking care to follow the biosecurity steps of thoroughly checking, cleaning and drying their clothes and equipment any time they have been in the water.

For more information visit the Non-native Species Secretariat [website](#).