

COMMON CRAYFISH

Decapoda: Cambaridae
Cambarus bartonii

Bug
of the
Month



This crayfish (also known as a crawdad or crawfish) was found in Herod Run within Penn State's Stone Valley Forest! *Cambarus bartonii* is one of Pennsylvania's native crayfish species and is commonly known as the Appalachian brook crayfish or the common crayfish. It is among twelve crayfish species found in Pennsylvania. Populations of *C. bartonii* must compete for resources with the invasive rusty crayfish (*Orconectes rusticus*), which was introduced from the Ohio River Basin.

You can differentiate *C. bartonii* from the invasive *O. rusticus* is by looking at their sides and rostrum, or "nose". *O. rusticus* has a rusty looking spot on its sides and their rostrum comes into three sharp points like a crown. In contrast, *C. bartonii* does not have a rusty spot and its rostrum is smoother. We can reduce the spread of aquatic invasive species by checking fishing gear before entering a new body of water, not relocating crayfish, and not releasing unused crayfish bait into new locations.

C. bartonii is an omnivore, eating both smaller aquatic insects and decaying organic matter. *C. bartonii* is also a scrumptious prey item for fish, birds, reptiles, and mammals. Humans are among the list of predators for crayfish, harvesting, boiling, and eating crayfish tails. Yum! However, make sure to harvest and eat crayfish only from clean waters, and help do your part to keep Pennsylvania waters clean!!

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