

CRAWFISH RECORDING PROJECT



Why record crawfish?

Crawfish, *Palinurus elephas* (also known as crayfish, rock lobster or European spiny lobster) are one of the the largest crustacean species found in British and Irish waters. They suffered a dramatic decrease in population as a result of tangle netting and diver collection, particularly in the 1970s and 1980s. Crawfish were identified as a Biodiversity Action Plan species because of the pitifully small numbers that remain; the subsequent post-2010 Biodiversity Framework described them as 'not viable' meaning that urgent action is required to manage the population.

If you are lucky enough to see a crawfish **DO NOT COLLECT IT!** Numbers are now low enough that divers should not take them, even if it is legal to do so.

The aim of this recording project is to add to our knowledge of the distribution of crawfish and to inform other research and management measures to protect them. Seasearch divers are a major source of crawfish records on the National Biodiversity Network (NBN).



Where are crawfish found?

Crawfish are found mainly around the west coast of Ireland, Wales, the north and west coasts of Scotland and the south-west of England, though there are some records from the east coast. They live in and around rocky reefs and wrecks, usually deeper than 20m.

Their most obvious feature and one that divers usually spot first are the distinctive long striped antennae. Smaller animals are usually hiding in crevices and you may not see the whole body. If you are lucky enough to see a large adult it may be out in the open.

How to take part

You can use the crawfish recording form to tell us about any crawfish you saw on a dive even if you do not complete a Seasearch form. Copies of the recording form and these notes can be downloaded from the Seasearch website, www.seasearch.org.uk

THANKYOU FOR YOUR RECORDS!



How to complete and return the form

The first part of the form has your contact details. Only your name will appear on the NBN or in any published data. Your email address will be used for any queries and to keep in touch with you about Seasearch activities. Please complete a separate form for each dive and them to info@seasearch.org.uk

Site name and location: Be as specific as you can.

Date/time: This enables us to correct your given depths to chart datum.

Position: This is essential information; lat/long should be in degrees and decimal minutes and refer to the WGS84 datum (please state if otherwise).

Depths: Please record the shallowest and deepest depth where you saw crawfish.

Habitat: Tick one of the habitats where crawfish were seen. If crawfish were found in more than one habitat circle the predominant one. If 'other' please indicate details in the 'Additional notes' section.

Number: Please tell us how many crawfish you saw in total on your dive.

Additional notes: Please record anything unusual or of interest in this section.

Crawfish details

Estimate of carapace length (cm): If the animal is sufficiently exposed you may be able to estimate the length of the carapace, which is taken from the rear edge of the carapace to the spine between the eyes (see below).

Use your hand as a rough guide – from the tip of your middle finger to the base of your thumb. Tell us whether it was larger or smaller than this.

