



## Guide to Crayfish Trapping

A step by step guide to becoming a successful, safe and legal crayfish trapper.

### Where to Trap

1. Choose a river or lake where Signal Crayfish are known to populate in large amounts. Waters like this are not particularly hard to find, and reports of venues 'infested' with the species are regularly reported all over the country. These are the obvious places to target, as the larger the haul, the more value to your catch.
2. The second point on choosing a venue is highly important - get in touch with the [Environment Agency](#) (EA) in your area to check that where you intend to trap is not a 'restricted' zone.

There can be several factors leading to 'restricted zones'. Firstly, areas known to have populations of our native White-Clawed crayfish (or any other 'at-risk' wildlife), of which trapping is strictly prohibited.

Other reasons a venue could be 'restricted' include;

- a. being a SSSI (site of specific scientific interest) although through consultation with Natural England, fishing may be possible on some
- b. being run by the [Canal & Rivers Trust](#) - no trapping is currently permitted on any Canal run by the Canal & Rivers Trust.

**Once a suitable venue has been found, the two things that MUST be in place before any trapping can begin, are**

- 1. written consent from the EA, and**
- 2. landowner's permission.**

It is not good enough having one of these two things in place, to be fully compliant with the law, both must be completed BEFORE and trapping and removal of crayfish can take place.

When applying for EA consent, the consent form gives all the legal specifications regarding the traps themselves (entrance sizes, mesh sizes, otter guards etc.), and asks for the amount of traps that are intended to be used.

This is for them to be able to send out the 'tags'. These 'tags' are a way of the Environment Agency policing trapping to some degree. Each tag has a reference number on it, specific to that particular person. If an 'illegal' trap were to be found, or a trap found somewhere it shouldn't be, this reference number is a way of tracing the culprit, and appropriate legal action taken (which can include a large fine!).

Obtaining the landowners consent for a water can be the most challenging part. When public waters are involved, it's often the local council that need addressing. Angling clubs and syndicates can often

be a bit easier and quicker to gain consent for, as most of the time, crayfish removal is high up on the anglers' agenda.

Proper course of action must be taken however, and the venue in question must be informed and consent to it before trapping can commence. Sometimes, the Environment Agency will require written confirmation from the venue in question.

Once all the points above have been addressed, and you've attached the tags to all your traps, you're ready to get out and catch some crayfish!

### What to Trap With

Crayfish trapping is normally done with either pots or fyke nets, with fyke nets being limited to use on still-waters. Pots come in various shapes and sizes, with 'fladens' being the most popular.

**Alternative pots can be used however, although they MUST comply with the EA regulations (maximum length 600mm, width 350mm, mesh size 30mm and an opening of 95mm). Traps with an entrance greater than 95mm MUST be fitted with an otter guard.**

These traps can be attached to robust strings, and thrown in from the bank, either pegging the bank-side end of the string down or tying it to bank-side trees/foliage. Traps can also be placed from a boat, although this is a little more specialised and requires some practice, where allowed, fishing from a boat can be an advantage. Although it's worth pointing out that all safety practices should be observed and boat licensing/insurance should be up to date.

Crayfish traps are generally placed in around 1m of depth, with clear gravelly areas tending to produce larger catches. From experience, silty or weedy areas never produce as well as clearer areas (the habitat crayfish naturally prefer).

Generally, the crayfish season runs from April through to November when the waters at its warmest and the crayfish are most active. However, although the catches are far less, they can be caught year-round.

### Bait

In terms of bait, we find the fresher the bait, the better.

Our particular favourites are salmon heads (as it takes the crayfish longer to eat than fleshier baits), trout, or in the warmer months, oily fish such as mackerel. Baits are either thrown loose in the traps or put in 'bait cages' to prolong the effectivity of the bait.

**The Environment Agency stipulates that traps MUST be checked every 24 hours.**

Any crayfish caught MUST NOT be released back in to any waterway alive.

### Getting Paid for Your Catch

As a company, we will always take 100% of your catch, although can only offer payment for live crayfish above the legal selling size (10cm or 35g). This payment is done on a price per kilo basis, with the rate varying throughout the year from £2.50 to £3.50 (in 2014), depending on demand.

**If any other fish species are caught in traps (occasionally tench or perch), they MUST be returned to the water immediately.**

**One final condition made by the Environment Agency, is that all traps/ancillary equipment MUST be disinfected with an appropriate disinfectant before being used on a new body of water.** This is important as it minimises the risk of crayfish plague, or other potentially harmful pathogens. We recommend immersing traps and equipment in iodophors for 15 minutes before switching venues.

When emptying and re-baiting your crayfish traps, we recommend you store the crayfish in sealed plastic containers with air-holes, and no water.

Finally, please bring your catch to one of our sites where the crayfish will then be graded, weighed, cleaned and processed, ready to be sold! The grading process is extremely accurate and basically puts sorts the whole catch in to the appropriate size class, at which point we will log the results and usually send a message to the fisherman informing them of their 'weights'. It is these figures we use to determine the payment.

As a company, we provide a professional and highly successful crayfish removal service, as well as purchasing Signal Crayfish from licensed trappers up and down the country.

Along with being fully licensed and compliant with the Environment Agency, we currently hold full public liability insurance, and all our employees have received the appropriate training. We have a fantastic track record in trapping lakes and river country-wide, providing a valuable service for angling clubs, private and public waters alike.

Thanks for reading, any queries, please don't hesitate to get in touch on 07792 440 618.

And don't forget...



<http://thecrayfishcompany.com/>