

SPECIES SPOTLIGHT

Look for it now in Southwest Ohio!

4/18/2021



Photos by Lauren Connolly

Crayfish (*Astacidae* and *Cambaridae* families)

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Mud bugs, yabbies, craydids, crawdaddies, freshwater lobster, crayfish--no matter what you call them, these crustaceans are important to freshwater ecosystems. A crustacean is an animal that is typically aquatic with a hard exoskeleton; examples include crab, lobsters, shrimp, and locally, wood lice and crayfish. The exoskeleton, or hard outer shell, supports and protects the crayfish's body. In order to grow and regenerate any limbs lost, it must molt (shed) its exoskeleton.

This animal is commonly seen in creeks, often hiding under rocks and scavenging for food. Scavengers are essential because they take dead and decaying matter and recycle the nutrients back into the ecosystem. Crayfish are an important food source for raccoons, fish, and even humans!

To learn more, visit <https://kids.kiddle.co/Crayfish>

FUN FACTS

- Crayfish have been around for over 150 million years
- Some crayfish can live over 20 years
- There are around 200 species of crayfish in the world
- They are often maroon, brown, or a muddy green color, but some crayfish are blue
- Terrestrial crayfish do not have a direct connection to bodies of water; instead, they burrow in soil, deep enough to reach the water table; look for their "chimneys," which look like tiny mud volcanoes
- Crayfish breathe through feather-like gills