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Department of Biodiversity,  
Conservation and Attractions

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Remember, you must have a current recreational fishing licence if you want to fish for marron. Details are provided on the back page of this brochure.

Age, condition, water and soil, food sources, and individual genes can all lead to differences in colouring, claw shape, and other features between individuals of the same species.

species.

Telling freshwater crayfish apart can often be difficult. This brochure outlines the major physical differences between marron, koonacs, yabbies and gilgies to help you identify these

commonly caught by recreational fishermen in the streams and dams of southern W.A.

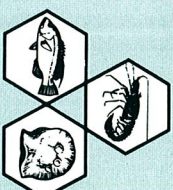
are of Western Australia's great delicacies, and an important part of the food chain in native ecosystems. There are nearly 100 species native to Australia, and four of these are commonly caught by recreational fishermen in the streams and dams of southern W.A.

# Freshwater crayfish

## Identifying freshwater crayfish



### in Western Australia



FISHERIES DEPARTMENT  
OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA  
May 1992

### Observe closely . . .

Close observation and eliminating the obvious are the secrets of correct identification. As Sherlock Holmes once said, "Eliminate the impossible, and whatever remains, no matter how improbable, must be the truth."

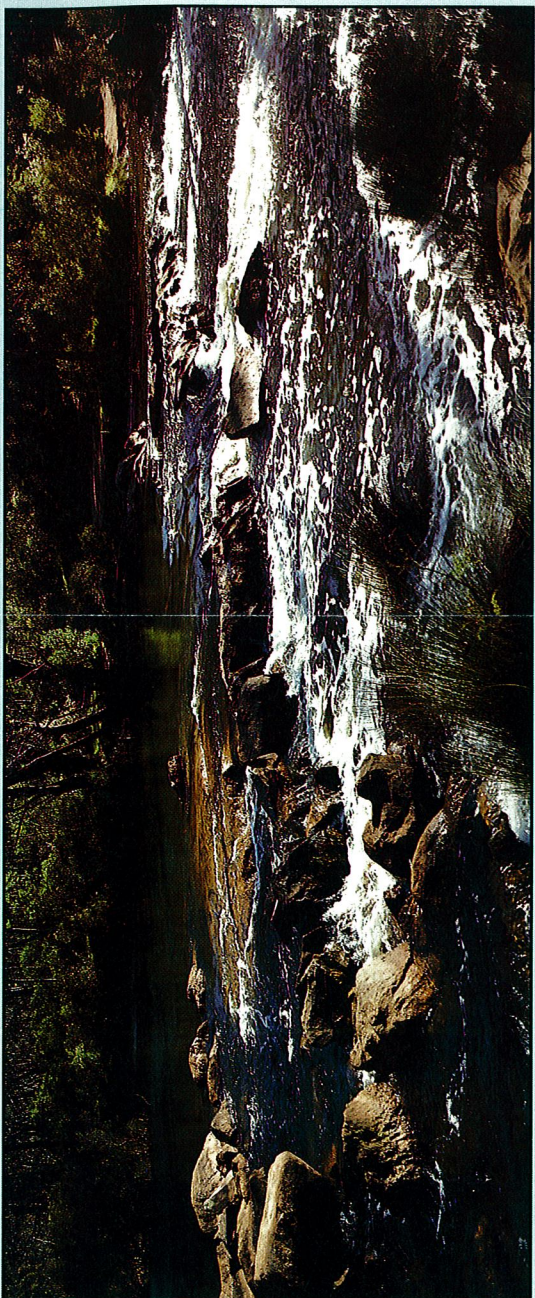
There are six crucial factors that you should consider in combination when looking at a crayfish (apart from how to cook it). None of these factors is necessarily definitive on its own.

#### PLACE CAUGHT

Note the place you caught it. Was it in the main stream of a permanent river? or in a feeder stream that probably dries out in summer? Was it in a gully dam with permanent water? or in a stock feed dam that either dries out or becomes hot and stagnant in summer?

#### SIZE

Size is a distinguishing factor, but not a positive identifier. Gilgies are usually less than 10 cm long, and marron grow to the largest size of any freshwater crayfish in Western Australia.



#### HEAD

Look for the number of ridges ("keels") that run lengthwise along the top of the head. The number of pairs of spines on the spike that sticks out of the forehead ("rostrum") is also of interest.

#### CLAWS

Note the shape, marking pattern, width, and presence (or absence) of hairs.

#### TAIL

Look at the central panel of the fan. If there are two small spines on the top you've almost certainly got a marron. No other freshwater crayfish at present in W.A. has this feature.

#### COLOUR

Colour can be very misleading on its own, and may vary greatly according to local water conditions etc. Take in combination with the other identifying factors.

### Marron farming

Any commercial fish farming operation needs to be licensed, and have approval from the Fisheries Department, the W.A. Water Authority, and local government.

A brochure outlining the types of commercial fish farming licences, and fees, is available from the Fisheries Department.

It is not necessary to have a licence to stock dams on private property for home consumption, or to farm marron as a hobby, but it is illegal to take marron from the wild to stock your ponds or dams.

A list of licensed fish farmers who sell marron and other freshwater crayfish for stocking is available from the Fisheries Department.



### Marron fishing? Buy a licence.

To fish for marron in Western Australia you must have a recreational fishing licence. A small annual fee is payable. Commercial marron fishing is not permitted in the wild.

A brochure outlining the rules for marron fishing is supplied when you get your licence.

Apply for a marron fishing licence at:

Fisheries Department of Western Australia  
108 Adelaide Terrace, East Perth 6004.  
Tel. (09) 220 5333  
or any county office of the department (listed in the W.A. county telephone book).

It is not necessary to have a licence for catching koonacs, yabbies, or gilgies in Western Australia.

### Further information

Fisheries officers are always glad to help. If you have any questions about the management of Western Australia's fisheries please contact:  
Fisheries Department of Western Australia  
108 Adelaide Terrace, East Perth 6004.  
Tel (09) 220 5333  
or any county office of the department (listed in the W.A. county telephone book).

FISHERIES DEPARTMENT  
OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA



**Marron** (*Cherax tenuimanus*)

**Habitat** Sandy bottoms of permanent rivers and streams in the South-West. Gully dams which remain cool and well-oxygenated in summer. Marron don't burrow to escape drought.

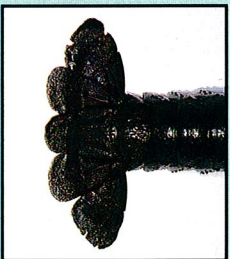
**Size** Grows up to 38 cm or more. Anything over 20 cm is almost certainly a marron.

**Head** Five ridges on the head. 3 pairs of spines on the long spike or "rostrum".

**Claws** Usually narrow and pincer-like.

**Tail** Two small spines on the central segment of the fan. No other W.A. crayfish has this feature.

**Colour** Usually jet black at larger sizes, and brown when young, but may range to brown, blue, variegated, or even red.



**Koonac** (*Cherax plebejus* / *Cherax glaber*)

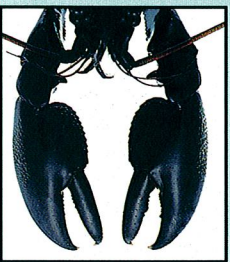
**Habitat** Inland rivers and swamps which dry up seasonally. Koonacs burrow to escape drought.

**Size** Up to 20 cm.

**Head** Four low ridges on the head, no spines on the short spike that protrudes from the forehead ("rostrum").

**Claws** Broad spade-like claw with serrations on the inside edge. Fine hairs on the upper surface of the claw, and evenly-distributed spot markings on the upper surface.

**Colour** Dark blue-black to mottled brown-black.



**Yabbie** (*Cherax destructor* - *albidus*)

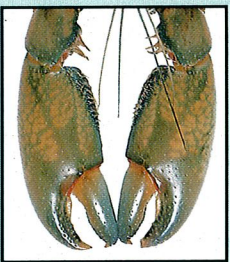
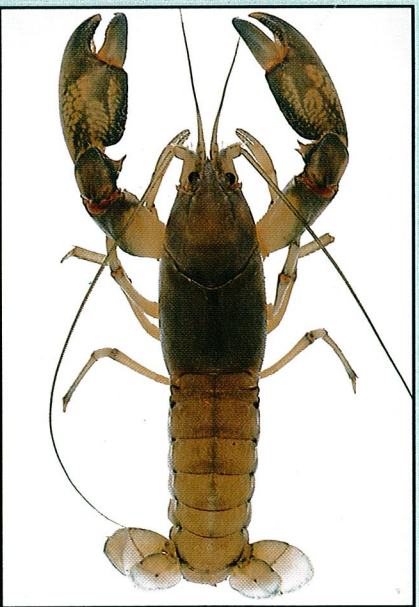
**Habitat** Yabbies live naturally in semi-permanent and permanent streams and lakes of New South Wales, Victoria, and South Australia. They were imported into West Australian farm dams during the 1940s and '50s. Yabbies also burrow to escape drought, often into the walls of irrigation channels, hence the name *C. destructor*.

**Size** Up to about 13 cm.

**Head** Very similar to the Koonac, with four ridges, and a smooth short rostrum.

**Claws** Broad, but usually narrower than a koonac's, with serrations on inner edge covered by a mat of fine hairs. A distinct mottled pattern appears on the outer edge of the claw.

**Colour** Usually a pale coffee colour, but ranges to dark brown.



**Gilgie** (*Cherax quinquecarinatus* / *C. crassimanus*)

**Habitat** Small semi-permanent streams and swamps. Gilgies burrow to escape drought.

**Size** The smallest of these four crayfish, gilgies may grow to over 13 cm, but are usually much smaller.

**Head** Five ridges on the head like a marron, but only two pairs of spines on the rostrum.

**Claws** Medium width, usually slightly broader than marron claws.

**Tail** No central spines on the centre segment of the fan. A marron has two spines here.

**Colour** Dark brownish black with a blue-brown mottled pattern on the claws and body.

