

Identifying your catch

Know your target species - the common yabby

The Victorian Fisheries Authority (VFA) has commenced a two-year trial of a permit-based fishery to increase the supply of live bait yabbies (*Cherax destructor*) for recreational fishing.

Permit holders will be authorised to collect live yabbies from specified locations, for the purposes of sale as bait.

Permit holders are not permitted to take any species other than common yabbies.

However, other species can be confused with yabbies and it's important to make sure you are not accidentally taking a prohibited species. Key features of common yabbies are shown below.

Description

The common yabby is a small freshwater crayfish.

Most adults are between 10 to 20 centimetres in length, but they can grow up to 30 centimetres.

They have a smooth shell and are mostly dark brown or green-brown in colour, although they can also appear red or bluish in certain conditions. The underside is generally lighter than the top shell colour.

They have large front claws which are usually broad and smooth and may be pale or bluish at the tips.

They have a broad tail fan and a short triangular rostrum (the forward-projecting spine between eyes).

Distribution

Yabbies are common in Victoria and can be found in lakes, swamps, billabongs, farm dams, irrigation canals and drains and also in slow, muddy rivers and creeks.

Yabbies are especially hardy and can survive years of drought by burrowing, later emerging during wet periods to feed, breed and migrate.

Common yabby (*Cherax destructor*)



Variable colour - usually black, blue-black, dark brown or green-brown. Occasionally reddish. Underside usually a lighter colour.

Smooth shell.

Broad tail fan.

Front claws mostly broad and smooth. Often pale or bluish at the tips.

Rostrum (spine between eyes) is short and triangular with small side spines.

Length typically 10 to 20cm

Other species you may encounter

Permit holders may come across other species that could be confused with yabbies. You may come across several species of spiny crayfish when fishing for yabbies, including:

- Murray spiny crayfish (*Euastacus armatus*)
- Glenelg spiny crayfish (*Euastacus bispinosus*)
- Central highlands spiny crayfish (*Euastacus woiwuru*).

If you catch a spiny crayfish, or any species other than a common yabby, it must be returned to the water immediately at the point of capture, with the least possible injury or damage. They must not be kept or sold as bait.

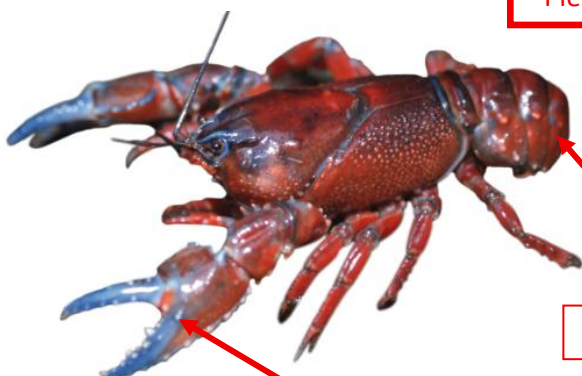
As a general rule, if you are unsure whether it's a yabby or not, let it go.

Spiny crayfish are distinguished from yabbies by their:

- heavy armour and sharp spines covering their claws, head and body
- broad, large claws
- typically larger in size.

Key features of spiny crayfish are shown below.

Central highlands spiny crayfish (*Euastacus woiwuru*)



Bright blue claws when mating

Spines on tail and carapace

Please let go



Murray spiny crayfish (*Euastacus armatus*)



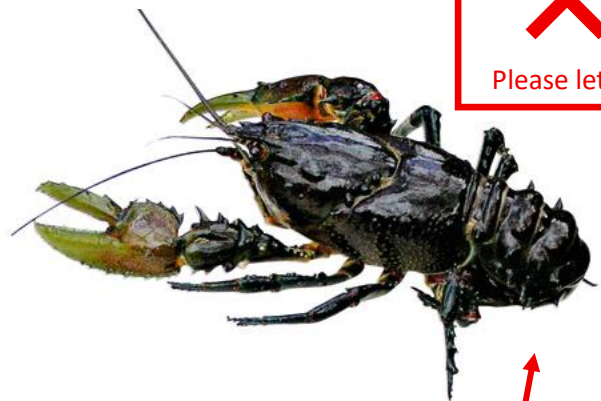
Spines on tail and carapace



Please let go

Length typically 20 to 30cm

Glenelg spiny crayfish (*Euastacus bispinosus*)



Spines on tail and carapace



Please let go