

# Crayfish Habitats

When you think about a crayfish, you probably picture it in a stream or river, or maybe in a lake or pond. But, did you know that crayfish also live in lawns, wetlands and even roadside ditches?

There are two kinds of crayfish that live in Pennsylvania—surface-dwelling crayfish and burrowing crayfish.

Burrowing crayfish dig tunnels in wetlands, lawns or other areas with moist soils. Burrows usually have multiple entrances

that meet underground and lead to a resting chamber that holds water. A network of tunnels may be dug in all directions from the resting chamber. A deep tunnel is almost always dug straight down from the resting chamber. This tunnel takes the crayfish deeper into the earth to find water when there is a drought.

A burrowing crayfish is rarely seen above ground during the daytime, but you may see one of its chimneys. Crayfish chimneys are made of mud balls that the crayfish brings to the surface when it digs its burrow.

Surface-dwelling crayfish live in streams, creeks, rivers and lakes. It only digs shallow holes under rocks or water-filled tunnels along a streambank.



*Crayfish chimney*

## Burrowing Crayfish Found in Pennsylvania:

- Digger Crayfish
- Devil Crayfish
- Upland Burrowing Crayfish
- Blue Crayfish
- Little Brown Mudbug



*Little Brown Mudbug*

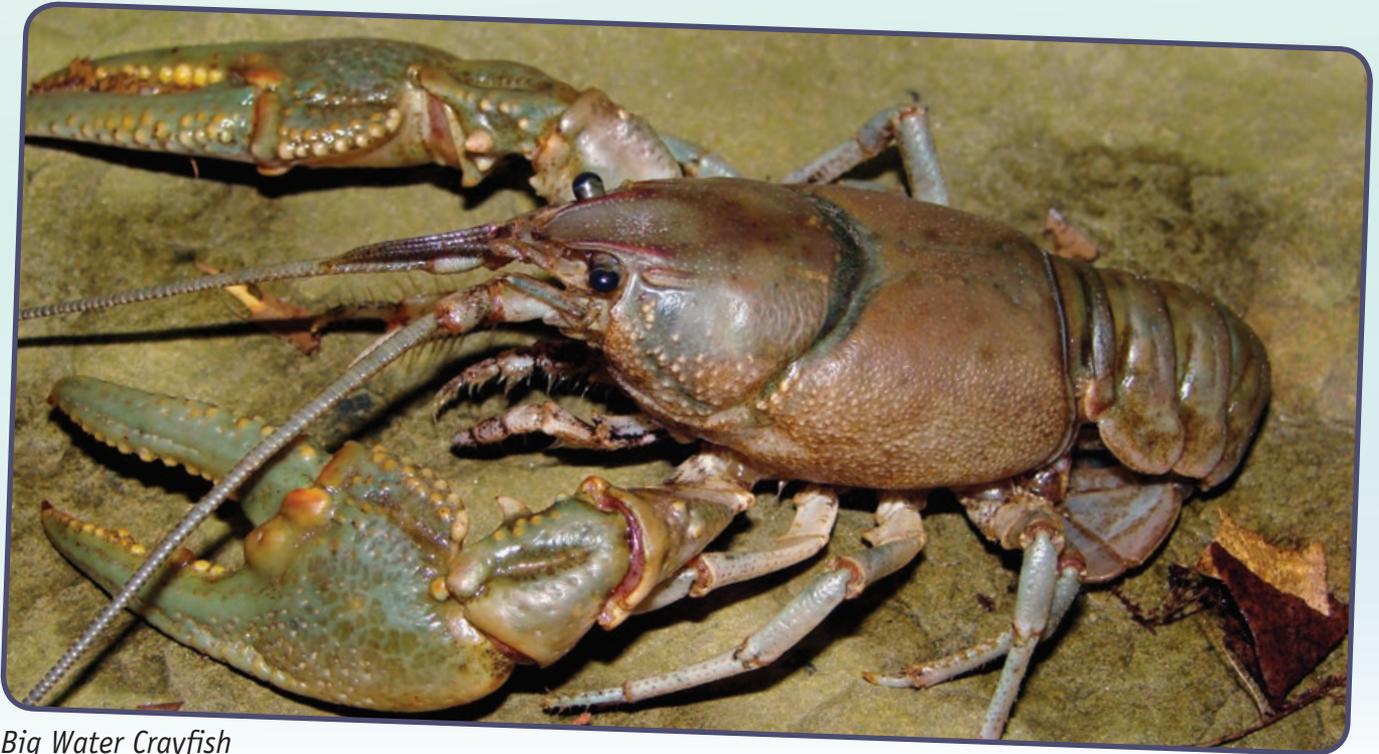
## Surface-dwelling Crayfish Found in Pennsylvania:

- Common Crayfish
- Rock Crayfish
- Big Water Crayfish
- Acuminate Crayfish
- Allegheny Crayfish
- Spinycheek Crayfish
- Northern Clearwater Crayfish
- Papershell Crayfish



*Allegheny Crayfish*

# Counting on Crayfish



*Big Water Crayfish*

Crayfish are a vital link in the food chain of an aquatic **ecosystem** and serve as a main food item for many fish, birds, mammals, reptiles and amphibians. In fact, scientists have found that over 240 species of wild animals in North America eat crayfish.

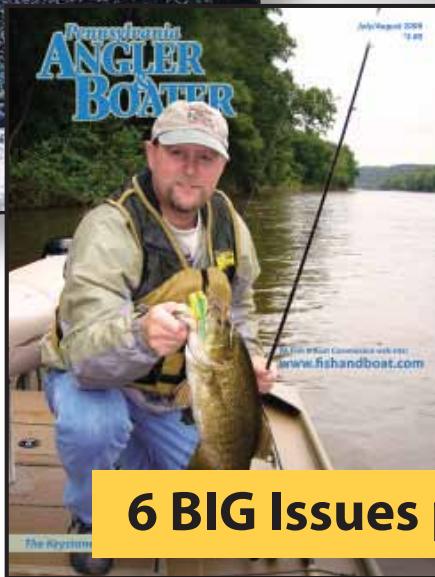
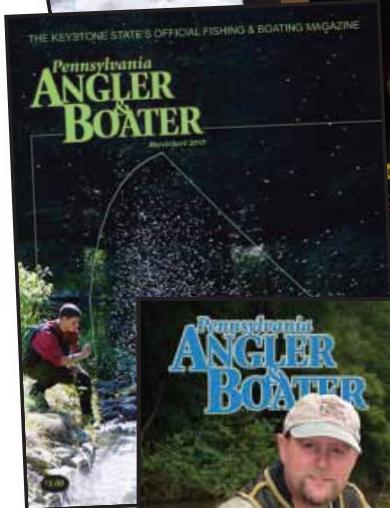
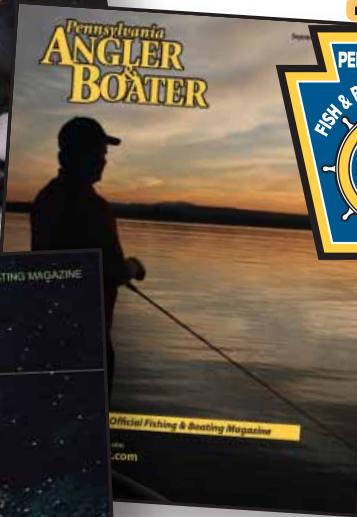
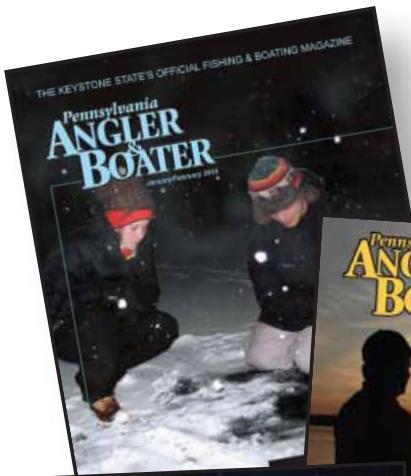
Wild animals depend on crayfish in another way too—using the burrows dug by burrowing crayfish. The Eastern Massasauga and Kirtland's Snake are two endangered species that rely on crayfish burrows to hibernate. Over

500 other animals, such as leopard frogs, dragonflies and jumping mice, use crayfish burrows.

Crayfish eat plants and animals that are both dead and alive. By eating dead matter, crayfish help improve water quality.



*Queensnakes eat mostly crayfish, usually when the crayfish is soft during molting.*



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