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Conserving South Carolina's At-Risk Species:

Species facing threats to their survival

Mimic crayfish

(*Distocambarus carlsoni*)



Mimic crayfish/South Carolina Department of Natural Resources

Description

The Mimic crayfish has a dorsal surface of the carapace that is reddish- or greenish-brown. The dorsal surface of the thoracic region is also dark, but the ventral surface is a lighter lavender-cream color. The tail is tan and pinkish, and the chelae (claws) are lavender with a dark brown dorsal stripe and 5 to 7 tubercles (nodules) on the mesial surface. The first few adult specimens collected ranged from about 50–62 mm (2–2.5 in.) in total length.

Range

The Mimic crayfish is a terrestrial obligate burrower endemic to South Carolina, and is known only from 7 counties in the western Piedmont: Abbeville, Anderson, Greenville, Greenwood, Laurens, Newberry, and Saluda Counties.

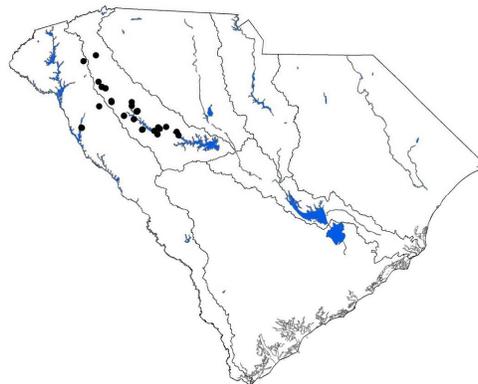
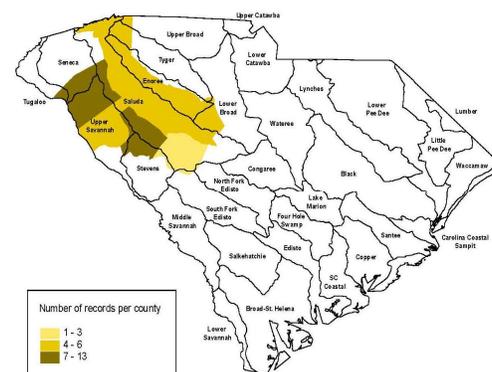
Habitat

Not much is known about the habitat requirements of the Mimic crayfish. Like other primary burrowers, soil type is probably critical in determining its distribution. The habitat has been described at the type locality as a swampy area with a water table fluctuating from the surface to 0.8 m (31.5 in.) below. The soil was described as sandy clay, with areas rich in

humus and leaf litter. It was shady and had a canopy composed of sweet gum, tulip tree, alder, and several pine and oak species.

Status

NatureServe does not currently identify a ranking in South Carolina for the Mimic crayfish, but it lists its global ranking as imperiled to vulnerable (G2/G3). The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service was petitioned to list the species in April 2010 and published a substantial 90-day finding in September 2011 indicating listing may be warranted.



Watersheds and spatial distribution of Distocambarus carlsoni, Arnold G. Eversole, 2004 & 2014.

Threats

The Mimic crayfish has an extremely restricted distribution and is not abundant,

even when found. Since so little is known about the species, it is possible that there are potential threats to its habitat that have not yet been fully realized.

Management/Protection Needs

Updated surveys are needed for the species. Monitor known populations to determine if they are in decline, stable or increasing. Research on the life history and habitat preferences of this species is also greatly needed as this information is currently lacking. Develop and conduct landowner and general education programs that stress the unique nature of terrestrial burrowing crayfish and their importance in South Carolina.

References

Eversole, Arnold G., *Identification and Distribution of Crayfishes in South Carolina: A South Carolina State Wildlife Grants Project - Final Report*. June 2014.

Eversole, Arnold G. and Jones, Danny R., *Key to the Crayfish of South Carolina*, Clemson University, Department of Forestry and Natural Resources. December 2004.

NatureServe. 2015. NatureServe Explorer: An online encyclopedia of life [web application]. Version 7.1. NatureServe, Arlington, Virginia. Available <http://explorer.natureserve.org>.

South Carolina Department of Natural Resources—State Wildlife Action Plan: 2010-2015.

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