

# prairie crayfish

## *Procambarus gracilis*

### FEATURES

The prairie crayfish has large claws with many bumps. The adult has a bright red thorax and abdomen and is red-brown elsewhere. Young are red-brown overall.

### BEHAVIORS

The prairie crayfish digs burrows in low, poorly drained land that is covered with grasses or other prairie plants. Since so little prairie remains in the state today, this crayfish is most often found near ditches. *Procambarus gracilis* spends most of the year underground in a burrow that may reach more than six feet deep. This burrow often is below the water table and is water-filled. On moist nights or during periods of heavy rainfall, the prairie crayfish may be found walking about on the soil's surface. This crayfish may live for three or four years. Females with young attached have been found in Illinois in March, April and October.

### TAXONOMY

Kingdom: Animalia  
Phylum: Arthropoda  
Class: Malacostraca  
Order: Decapoda  
Family: Cambaridae

### ILLINOIS STATUS

common, native

### ILLINOIS RANGE





Photo by MDC Staff, courtesy Missouri Department of Conservation.

### **Aquatic Habitats**

wet prairies and fens; rivers and streams

### **Woodland Habitats**

none

### **Prairie and Edge Habitats**

none