

# The Freshwater Crayfish of Werrikimbe National Park

## Ellen Clark's Crayfish

### *Euastacus clarkae*

Ellen Clark's Crayfish is a small freshwater crayfish with a very limited distribution area, only occurring within Werrikimbe National Park part of the NSW Gondwana Rainforest. *Euastacus clarkae* is restricted to highland, headwater reaches of streams draining the plateau and feeding the Hastings and Forbes rivers, at elevations ranging from 670-1150 m a.s.l. They are small only reaching 110 mm head to tail and are a cryptic species rarely seen, preferring to hide in their burrows during the day and sneaking out at night to feed. They are the base food source for many creatures and one of the reasons that platypus are so prolific in the area.

Adult female crayfish are the engines that drive the whole stream ecology, for 20-40 years or more the females will release hundreds of juveniles/year into the stream and these small tiny crayfish are the food source for all our other native, fish, reptiles and mammals that live in the catchment. If anything happens to an adult female, the consequences are felt through the food chain for the next 10 years so please help protect these amazing small freshwater crayfish. All small *Euastacus* freshwater crayfish are protected in New South Wales regardless of size. The catching or possession of these crayfish is totally prohibited. If you see illegal fishing occurring REPORT the activity to your local fisheries office or via the Fishers Watch Phone line on 1800 043 536 or report it immediately to your nearest National Parks Ranger. If you find abandoned nets or traps, please remove them and dispose of them responsibly.

## The Hastings River

The Hastings River starts in Werrikimbe National Park in the vicinity of Racecourse Swamp at 1000 m a.s.l. which collects water from the surrounding mountain peaks at 1130 m and flows 165 km down the Hastings Valley to the Tasman Sea, at Port Macquarie, NSW. The Hastings River has a total catchment of 3,846 square kilometres, it encompasses eight tributary rivers including the Bunnoo, Ellenborough, Forbes, Maria, Pappinbarra, Thone, Tobins and Wilson as well as numerous smaller but significant creeks. *Euastacus clarkae* is only found in the upper Hastings and Forbes Rivers within Werrikimbe National Park. The species inhabits all sections of the permanent streams, in pools and riffles, with the larger adults taking the better habitat areas (deeper pools) and the smaller juveniles in shallower water and riffles.

## The Gondwana Rainforests of Australia

Gondwana Rainforests of Australia include the most extensive areas of subtropical rainforest in the world, large areas of warm temperate rainforest and nearly all of the Antarctic beech cool temperate rainforest. The Gondwana Rainforests of Australia World Heritage Area was first inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1986 and extended in 1994. It is a serial World Heritage Area comprised of several protected areas in north-east NSW and south-east Queensland. Werrikimbe National Park is 33,309 hectares in size comprising warm temperate rainforest and Antarctic beech cool temperate rainforest. Few places on earth contain so many plants and animals which remain relatively unchanged from their ancestors in the fossil records with a high number of rare and threatened species are of international significance for science and conservation.



### AUSTRALIAN CRAYFISH PROJECT "Conservation & Research"

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