Crayfish

What do we look like?

We are a species of freshwater invertebrate that resembles lobsters and shrimp. We usually grow to an average size of three inches long. We have a compact head with two eyes on moveable stalks and two pairs of sensory antennae. Like most crustaceans, we have a hard, segmented exoskeleton instead of bones, 8 legs, and two arms with pincers on the ends. We also have several pairs of leg-like appendages called bailers to push water over our gills and filter food into our mouths. Our colors can be sandy yellow, green, white, pink, brown, or dark orange.

Where we live is...

We are native to countries all over the world and live in the freshwater

lakes, ponds, streams and rivers in those countries. Over 500 species of us exist in North America alone, with most of us living in the southern United States like the Mississippi basin, and Louisiana and Kentucky. We are so common throughout the world that even some species of us live in salt water habitats off of island chains.

What do we eat?

We are a scavenging species of invertebrate, which means we will eat anything we can find in the water, both meat and plants. Some examples of our foods are dead fish, small goldfish and minnows, aquatic plants like algae, even the molted outer shells of other crayfish. We are called "opportunistic feeders" which is a special way of saying we eat anything we can find.

Some cool facts about us…

- We are also known as Crawdads and Crawfish in areas of the United States.

- We are a commonly used source of food for humans. Some dishes common in Louisiana rely heavily on us as the main ingredients, especially in Cajun and Creole dishes.

- We are a very shy animal. When humans or other large predators are near us we will hide in the nearest rock or crevice we can find.

- Since we can eat almost anything we find, we are very dangerous in lakes, ponds and streams where we don't belong. If introduced to these areas, we can ruin the food sources for animals that are native to that habitat.