



The Sand Crayfish

Cherax robustus

Riek, 1951



Paul Van der Werf and I had a quick trip out to Bribie Island in Queensland to collect a few Sand Crayfish. *Cherax robustus* is a small crayfish generally found in coastal lowland environments. It is distinguished by a tuft of setation on the ventral propodus just below the cutting edge. They prefer the ephemeral areas that flood and then dry. The permanent waterholes and creeks have crayfish along the periphery but they seem to avoid the deeper fish filled areas. They are a burrowing species that relies on its burrow system for survival. They tend to wander a fair bit moving from area to area and generally 3 out of 4 burrows are old abandoned ones. Most burrows are relatively rudimentary with only one or two entrances down into the water table if available. Excavation of some burrows found crayfish living in moist soil conditions. Due to the sandy nature of Bribie Island most burrows were less than 600 mm deep with one deep chamber and several burrows running parallel to the surface. Interestingly on Bribie Island another species of crayfish *Tenuibranchiurus* (Australia's smallest freshwater crayfish species) was found to be sheltering in *C. robustus* burrows both with and without *C. robustus* in residence.

