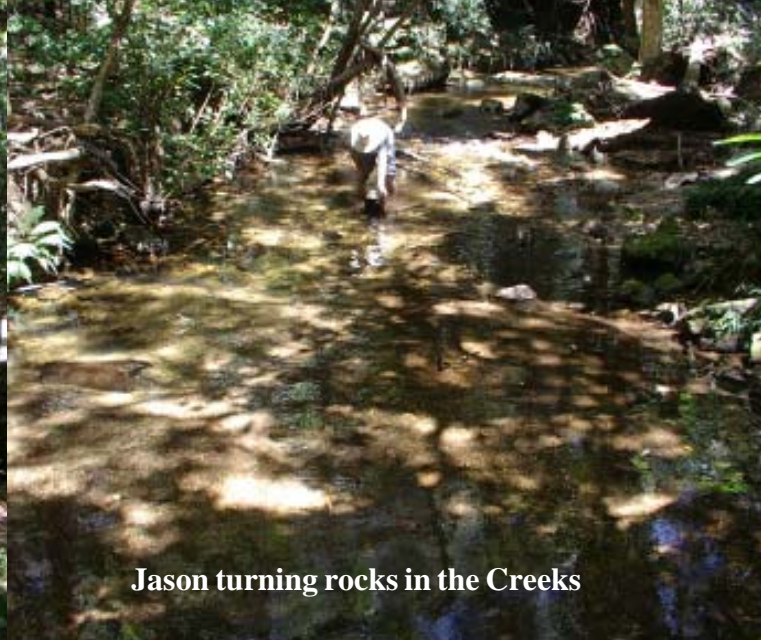




The end of the road, still no crayfish but nice rainforest



Jason turning rocks in the Creeks

Euastacus balanensis

Euastacus balanensis is a small hairy type crayfish from the high country over 750 mtrs in the mountains behind Cairns and through the Atherton tableland of Queensland. Jason and I spent some time chasing these critters and they were not the easiest animal to find so we really needed to work hard to find them. We had a look here, there and everywhere but even in what I thought was ideal habitat areas we failed to find any. Still many of the areas we looked were beautiful areas so we had a great time anyway.



Rob McCormack & Jason Coughran Davies Creek Queensland

The mountains behind Cairns are great for bushwalking and Jason and I went for a hike looking for *Euastacus balanensis*. We only found one small juvenile *E balanensis* in the main creek systems but like most of its similar crayfish species from further south we found most of our larger specimens in the marginal areas. The small tributary streams and wet areas were the place to look for these animals. We started finding them from around 750 m and they became more common as we got higher in elevation. There is not much in the way of roads through these areas so you do need to hike up the mountains. Unfortunately the rainforests in Queensland are not people freindly. Just about every plant, vine, palm or fern has sharp thorns and barbs, stinging nettles or a load of biting insects covering it. Every day we had more and more, scratches, cuts, stings and bites but we survived to tell the story.

They are a deep intricate burrowing species and most animals were beyond our reach in their burrows. However, there were animals that were just under rocks that were easily captured so we ended up with some. They are not an easy animal to find and we worked hard to get what we did. They are not prolific or plentiful in the area and all the specimens captured were very feisty and aggressive - they were a real handful for such a small crayfish. They are a shy and elusive species and once placed in a tank just ran for cover, hid away never to be seen again. They made for difficult subjects in the holding aquaria, and it was a time-consuming task to attempt to get the photographic records as they just did not want to get with the program. These are a relatively rare animal that does not have large populations that we could find so I expect that this species is of major conservation concern.



Euastacus balanensis

