

Media Release

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A NEW YABBY FOR AUSTRALIA

It only took us 15 years of rigorous research but finally we have formally described a new species of freshwater crayfish. The Swamp Yabby (*Cherax latimanus*) was formally described and published in the peer-reviewed international journal [Zootaxa](#). Robert McCormack as part of the Australian Crayfish Project commenced research on the species in 2006, in 2012, Tarmo Raadik from the Arthur Rylah Institute for Environmental Research, Victoria came onboard and together over the next 9 years they worked together researching this new crayfish species.

Cherax latimanus is a freshwater crayfish found along the Murray River from Lake Moira upstream to near Wodonga in New South Wales and Victoria, including along the Edwards River and Gulpa Creek, Barmah Forest, and the Murray River tributary catchments, an area of approximately 17,700 km². The common yabby *Cherax destructor* lives in this area and is well known, inhabiting just about every creek, river, swamp and farm dam. This new yabby *Cherax latimanus* can be found living within a metre of the common yabby but it lives in terrestrial environments, it's restricted to deep burrows in wet areas beside the creeks and rivers. It spends the majority of its life within its burrow system only venturing out when floods occur inundating its surface burrows. Burrows are typically in paddocks and roadside drains with terrestrial vegetation above the burrow.

This new species has been known to occur in the area for some time, unfortunately, lack of specimens and the difficulty in capturing specimens has seen the species go undescribed till now. Ellen Clark, a distinguished crayfish taxonomist, talking about common yabbies wrote in 1936 "*At Whitegate, a few miles from Benalla (Victoria), some areas riddled by yabbies are practically useless and are known as "crab hole country".* These may not be common yabby holes but *C. latimanus* burrows.

This is the first new species in the Murray Darling Basin since description of *Cherax rotundus* in 1941. It's extremely important to formally describe a species and give it a name. Our description provides the biological and distributional information the scientific community and management agencies need, to manage the future of this species. Governments, landholders, and conservation groups from both States now have all the information they need to protect and conserve this new species' future.



Figure 1 The Swamp Yabby *Cherax latimanus*

Both Robert (Research Director, Australian Aquatic Biological, NSW) and Tarmo (Senior Scientist, Arthur Rylah Institute for Environmental Research, Vic) continue to work together researching freshwater crayfish with many more new species currently under investigation.

For further information on *Cherax latimanus* visit:

www.mapress.com/zt/article/view/zootaxa.5026.3.2

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