

ALL OK IN FENNOSCANDIA? WELL, AT LEAST CRAYFISHERIES MESSED UP BIG TIME

EDSMAN, L & JUSSILA, J

*Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, Department of Aquatic Resources, Stångholmsvägen 2, SE 17893 Drottningholm, Sweden, lennart.edsman@slu.se
The University of Eastern Finland, Department of Environmental and Biological Sciences, Kuopio Campus, Yliopistoranta 8, 70210 Kuopio, Suomi-Finland, japo.jussila@uef.fi*

The relevance of the freshwater crayfish in Fennoscandia is based on their original economic value to rural communities and resulting lively and specific culinary festivities in the form of crayfish parties. The introduction of the crayfish plague disease agent to Europe eradicated part of the native crayfish and cultural habits based on its trapping and consumption. This all happened in the early part of the 20th century and after at least 50 years the horrifying decision was taken to bring alien species from North America to substitute the native noble crayfish populations and the fishery lost. After the initial studies and scattered stockings of the alien signal crayfish in Fennoscandia, massive stocking projects were initiated. Alien signal crayfish was introduced and promoted and it rather quickly was established to most of the water courses in southern and central Sweden and Finland as a result of licensed and illegal stockings. The warnings regarding detrimental effects of this alien species and a new very virulent strain of crayfish plague were ignored. This resulted, in a few decades, to further devastation of the remaining native noble crayfish stocks and also the discovery of lowered resistance against crayfish plague among alien signal crayfish stocks. Largely due to EU nature policies, attempts to preserve remaining native noble crayfish stocks were initiated and projects were started to eliminate alien signal crayfish stocks, although maybe now too late. These, and a few other outcomes of the often horrendous crayfisheries policies and practicalities are discussed and debated. The end result shows how vitally important it is to very carefully think before one acts.

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