

*Photo by Michael Redner*

Crayfish don't always live in water. There are some species that surprise us when their burrows show up on dry land. The most common of this prairie or grassland crayfish is the *Procambarus gracilis*.

Adults of this species are about 2-3 inches long, rusty brown in color with powerful pincers which are used to plow soil to the surface where it may spill over to form piles or even small chimneys at the burrow entrance. This activity occurs in clay, silt, or loam soils near lakes, grassy ditches or marshes.

The breeding season peaks in the spring and this is the time when burrows will be mostly observed. Males and females use the burrows to escape from predators, and as a nursery for their young.

Crayfish are omnivores and commonly emerge at night to roam about the turf in search of food which may include small bugs, beetles, worms and slow-moving caterpillars. While burrows may become an aesthetic nuisance on lawns, crayfish activity helps to reduce many insect turf pests.

To eliminate crayfish the area must be tilled and drained. Wood or stone fences fitted tightly against the ground have been used to reduce migration but perhaps the best approach is to wait out the activity.

The use of pesticides is NOT recommended in crayfish management. There are no labeled pesticides for crayfish but any chemicals put into their burrows will pollute groundwater and may kill aquatic animals and plants.



Crayfish burrow with characteristic pellets  
(In lawn on Sanibel Island).

*Photo by Beth Burns*

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