

Allozyme evidence for a new species of freshwater crayfish of the genus *Cherax* Erichson (Decapoda : Parastacidae) from the south-west of Western Australia

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Abstract. The marron, *Cherax tenuimanus* (Smith), is one of the most easily recognisable members of the freshwater crayfish genus *Cherax*. Since its description in 1912, the taxonomy of the species has not been in dispute, but recent genetic studies have demonstrated that the species is not homogenous and consists of two genetically distinct forms. One of these forms is widespread and exploited via aquaculture and the other is restricted to a single river system, the Margaret River. This paper presents allozyme data, collected over a 19-year period, which documents the introduction of the widespread form into the Margaret River and the subsequent reproductive interactions between the two forms. These data indicate minimal interbreeding between the two forms of marron and so justify their recognition as distinct species. As the original description of the marron was based on specimens collected from the Margaret River, the form native to this river retains the name *C. tenuimanus* and a new species, *Cherax cainii* Austin is described for the common, widespread form of marron. An additional outcome of this study is that *C. tenuimanus* has been rapidly displaced by the introduced *C. cainii* within the Margaret River. Consequently, urgent conservation measures are required to protect *C. tenuimanus* and prevent its possible extinction.

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