

REPRODUCTIVE BIOLOGY OF THE INTRODUCED RED CLAW CRAYFISH, *CHERAX QUADRICARINATUS* IN THE KAFUE FLOODPLAIN FISHERY

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Abstract

*A study of the reproductive biology of the introduced crayfish, *Cherax quadricarinatus* in the Kafue floodplains was undertaken from September to November 2015. Red claw crayfish in the fishery is caught as by-catches and no formal exploitation of the species has been recorded in the Kafue floodplain fishery. The species is important because it is an introduced species that has potential to provide alternative food. The study design was ecological and descriptive. The target species was red claw crayfish and the sample size was seven hundred fifty (750) specimens. Samples of the crayfish were collected from three different parts of the floodplains; Kafue Road Bridge, Namalyo in Monze and Kakuzu in Namwala. Sample collection was done through the use of traps locally known as Kamono. The parameters that were measured and recorded included carapace length (CL), total length (TL) and total weight (TW) from each specimen in the sample. Breeding seasonality of the crustacean was assessed by means of length frequency histograms using data collected from the samples. Length frequency histograms constructed showed distinct peaks indicating that the species had well-defined spawning seasons. The department of fisheries and interest stakeholders are advised to harness, market and promote crayfish exploitation to reduce pressure on native fish stocks. And that people should consider crayfish an alternative source of food.*

Key words: red claw crayfish, reproduction, Kafue floodplains

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