



Media Release

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WORLD FIRST: JUVENILE GIANT FRESHWATER CRAYFISH RELEASED

At an undisclosed location in Tasmania's north east, almost 60 juvenile captive-reared giant freshwater crayfish have been released into the wild.

The crayfish were raised at one of Huon Aquaculture's hatcheries under a program that aims to boost their numbers in the wild. The captive-rearing program is a partnership between Huon Aquaculture and Todd Walsh, a renowned Tasmanian ecologist and conservationist.

"The captive-rearing program was established to help with reintroducing the crayfish into areas where the species may have been extinct for generations," said David Mitchell, Huon's General Manager of Aquaculture.

The release marks the first time in the world that juveniles have been hatched from egg-carrying females, reared to a size that raises their chances of survival, and released.

The Tasmanian giant freshwater crayfish is the largest freshwater invertebrate and the largest freshwater crayfish species in the world—it is also vulnerable due to predation, poaching, sedimentation, and habitat loss

"Huon became involved in the project as a way to help conserve the species, which is present in the waterways near our hatchery. Our team has been there at every step of the way alongside Todd so today's release is the culmination of years of work and patience," said David.

The juveniles are up to 10 times larger than when they hatched and their survival rate will have increased exponentially.

"This will be the first ever re-introduction of Giant Freshwater Crayfish juveniles back into the wild," said Todd Walsh.

"The first captive breeding program was at the Uni of Tas Aquaculture centre in the 1980's, this is the second such program."

The release site was carefully selected as it has large tracts of juvenile habitat, with a surplus of shelters for each individual crayfish.

"Today is a significant step forward for the species, particularly for the north-eastern Tasmanian population," finished Todd.

The juveniles were tagged and measured prior to their release, and will be monitored by Todd over the coming years.

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Background overleaf.



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Background:

- Giant freshwater crayfish, also known as the giant freshwater lobster, are only found in the rivers below 400 metres above sea level in northern Tasmania.
- Giant freshwater crayfish have long lifespans and are slow growing.
- They are a threatened species which faces ongoing pressures.
- Permits for the release of the juveniles were issued by DPIPWE.
- With the appropriate permits and permissions, several egg-carrying females were captured in 2017 and 2019. After the eggs hatched and the juveniles left their mother, the females were safely returned to the wild.

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