

# Vitacress Conservation Trust supports essential crayfish work in Hampshire

**T**he Trust is delighted to announce vital funding from the Vitacress Conservation Trust to support its work to conserve and protect white-clawed crayfish in Hampshire.

Our Southern Chalkstreams Project aims to conserve and protect chalk river invertebrates across Hampshire, including the last remaining population of white-clawed crayfish in the county. The Vitacress Conservation Trust joins the Environment Agency, Natural England and the Bristol Zoological Society (BZS) as key partners of Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust to support the vital work of the project.

A launch event was held this July to celebrate this new partnership, at a watercress farm in the Itchen Valley, near Winchester, where work has been carried out to help restore and maintain the important chalk stream habitat essential to the survival of the white-clawed crayfish.

Vitacress Conservation Trust's Dr Steve Rothwell and Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust's Ecologist, Dr Ben Rushbrook, discussed conservation plans for the Itchen Valley, which include working closely with the Bristol Zoological Society on cutting-edge efforts to rear and release the



**Above: Dr Steve Rothwell, Deborah Whitfield and Dr Ben Rushbrook survey a chalkstream**

endangered white-clawed crayfish into their native habitat.

Speaking about the new partnership, Ben said: "We are delighted that the Vitacress Conservation Trust is committed to ensuring the long-term survival of white-clawed crayfish in Hampshire, and this funding will allow us to continue to work closely with Vitacress, other key landowners, and all our partners in

conserving the white-clawed crayfish in Hampshire."

White-clawed crayfish are the only species of crayfish native to the UK, and became classified as Globally Endangered in 2010. Having suffered a 95% reduction in distribution in Hampshire since the 1970s, the species may become at risk of extinction from the whole of the UK in the next 20-30 years.

With the essential long-running support of its statutory partners, we have been the lead organisation in the conservation of white-clawed crayfish in Hampshire for over five years. Now, with the additional support from the Vitacress Conservation Trust and BZS, we can continue to be this lead in the years to come. More information on the key mechanisms implemented to deliver this very important aspect of the Trust's work can be found on the Southern Chalkstreams Project pages on our website.



**Left: Dr Steve Rothwell, Dr Ben Rushbrook and Deborah Whitfield with a white-clawed crayfish**