

Nature LAB at WORK

by Angie Daly Morfeld

The Missouri Department of Conservation team is diverse and dedicated to conserving, protecting, and improving our fish, forest, and wildlife resources.

Bob DiStefano RESEARCH SCIENTIST

✦ As a resource scientist who directs MDC's Statewide Crayfish Conservation Program, Bob DiStefano conducts research on aquatic species, issues, and problems. He specializes in crayfish, although he has done work on sportfish, such as wall-eye and smallmouth bass.

"I simply love streams. I have long felt that my 'calling' was to be a strong steward of this one small but important part of our world. That has always driven me to be the best that I can be and justify the trust that the state's public and professionals have placed in me."

A Typical Day

DiStefano says the days that make up his 37-year career with the department can be divided in two — spring/summer and fall/winter. Much of his spring and summer days are spent primarily working in rivers and streams, and recently in caves, conducting research on the importance of crayfish to Missouri's aquatic systems and on our several at-risk crayfish species. Fall and winter months are spent mostly analyzing data and writing reports and articles about research findings.



Bob DiStefano has spent many days of his 37-year career with MDC wading through rivers and streams to learn more about crayfish species.

Notable Projects

In the last several years of his career, DiStefano has worked on the Caney Mountain Cave Crayfish, the rarest crayfish in the U.S. and Missouri, known to exist in only one cave in the entire world.

"It has been very humbling, and I have felt very privileged to help ensure this species will continue to exist and call Missouri its home," DiStefano said.

In addition, DiStefano and his crew spent 12 years studying the interactions between sportfish and crayfish, and the ecology of those important prey — the crayfish — in the Jacks Fork and Big Piney rivers.

"Studies of that length and depth are rare; nobody else has looked so deeply at these important stream relationships, and so Missouri's work has set the bar and is studied and used all over the country," DiStefano said.

How You Can Help

Just get outside in our waterways. Play in them, learn about and ask questions about these fascinating and very important resources that contribute so much to our well-being and our society.

His Education

- Bachelor's degree, Eastern Kentucky University: fisheries management
- Master's degree, Virginia Tech University: fisheries and wildlife science