Texas crawfish make USL professor see red

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LAFAYETTE — Jay Huner isn’t about to let some Texas red swamp crawfish become known as the biggest of its species, and he’s thrown down the gauntlet, or claw, to anyone who thinks they can find a bigger one.

Huner, director of the University of Southwestern Louisiana Crawfish Research Center, said a Texan brought him a male red swamp crawfish, scientifically known as Procambarus clarkii, weighing a whopping 5.1 ounces.

Its carapace, or head, is 3.12 inches long, and its total length is a tad over 6 inches.

“It is rare to find a red swamp crawfish larger than 2.5 ounces,” Huner said.

“The crawfish industry considers crawfish in the 8 to 10 per pound size range to be jumbos.”

The red swamp crawfish, one of 450 species of crawfish in the world, accounts for 80,000 to 90,000 tons of the 110,000 tons of crawfish produced worldwide each year, according to Huner.

Another crawfish species common to Louisiana, the white river crawfish, or Procambarus zonangulus, can grow as big as 4.5 ounces, he said.

Of all places, this red swamp specimen came from Texas, where a mere 5,000 acres of crawfish production is harvested a year, compared with 115,000 acres of crawfish ponds in Louisiana.

It was found in a commercial bass pond in Danbury, Texas, by Jefferson Boswell, the operation’s manager.

“At this point, Mr. Boswell’s Texas red swamp crawfish is the largest crawfish ever officially recorded and will be sent to the Smithsonian (Institution),” Huner said.

The crawfish will be preserved, not boiled, before it’s turned over to the Smithsonian in Washington, D.C.

To Huner, size does matter, and he isn’t about to let a crawfish from the Lone Star State get away with pinching the Crustacean Cup, even if Texas is known for its superlatives.

As Huner sees it, the honor of Louisiana and its crawfish is at stake.

“We are convinced that there are

Larger crawfish in Louisiana, and we welcome submissions of red swamp crawfish, or white river crawfish, for verification of size,” Huner said.

No matter what comes out of the contest, it’s doubtful that any U.S. entrants will be larger than Australia’s crawfish, called freshwater lobsters, that can get as big as 8 to 10 pounds each, according to Huner’s book “Crawfish — Louisiana’s Crustacean Delight.”