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Migration Infrastructure Design Impacts on Riverine Crustacean Population Dynamics Studies

Liang Ming [1,*]

[1] Universiti Putra Malaysia, Serdang, Malaysia
* Correspondence: Liang Ming, Universiti Putra Malaysia, Serdang, Malaysia

Abstract: The proliferation of anthropogenic barriers in riverine systems has fundamentally altered the population dynamics of aquatic organisms, particularly migratory crustaceans. This paper examines how migration infrastructure design influences crustacean population dynamics through comprehensive analysis of barrier effects, passageway effectiveness, and population fragmentation patterns. River fragmentation disrupts natural migration patterns essential for crustacean life cycles, leading to population isolation and demographic changes. The construction of migration passageways represents a critical intervention strategy, yet their design parameters significantly influence success rates. This study synthesizes current understanding of barrier impacts on crustacean populations, evaluating infrastructure design principles that promote population connectivity. Key findings indicate that passageway design features including gradient, substrate composition, and flow characteristics directly influence migration success. Population dynamics modeling reveals that even partial connectivity restoration can substantially improve population stability in fragmented systems. The research highlights the importance of species-specific design considerations, particularly for commercially important species. Furthermore, the temporal aspects of migration infrastructure operation significantly affect population recruitment patterns. This comprehensive analysis provides essential guidance for designing effective migration infrastructure that supports sustainable crustacean populations while accommodating human development needs. The findings emphasize the critical role of adaptive management approaches in optimizing infrastructure performance for long-term population viability.

Keywords: crustacean migration; infrastructure design; population dynamics; river fragmentation; barrier effects; passageway effectiveness

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1. Introduction

River systems worldwide face unprecedented anthropogenic modification through dam construction, weir installation, and other infrastructure developments that create barriers to aquatic organism movement [1]. These modifications have profound implications for riverine crustacean populations, which often depend on longitudinal connectivity for completing essential life cycle stages including spawning, feeding, and habitat colonization. The fragmentation of river networks disrupts natural population processes, leading to demographic changes that can threaten species persistence and ecosystem functionality [2].

Crustaceans represent a particularly vulnerable group to habitat fragmentation due to their complex life histories and specific habitat requirements during different developmental stages. Many species exhibit diadromous migration patterns, requiring access to both freshwater and marine environments for reproduction and growth [3]. The construction of barriers fundamentally alters these migration corridors, potentially isolating populations and reducing genetic exchange between upstream and downstream segments.

The recognition of these impacts has led to increased focus on developing migration infrastructure designed to restore connectivity while maintaining the functionality of anthropogenic barriers [4]. However, the effectiveness of such infrastructure varies considerably depending on design parameters, target species characteristics, and environmental conditions. Understanding the relationship between infrastructure design and crustacean population dynamics is essential for developing evidence-based management strategies that balance human needs with ecological integrity.

2. Barrier Effects on Crustacean Population Structure

2.1. Population Fragmentation Mechanisms

River barriers fundamentally alter crustacean population structure by disrupting continuous population distributions into discrete fragments [5,6]. These fragmented populations experience reduced gene flow, leading to increased genetic differentiation and potential local adaptation to specific environmental conditions. The degree of fragmentation depends on barrier characteristics including height, design, and operational patterns, with complete barriers creating absolute separation while partial barriers may allow limited movement under specific conditions.

The demographic consequences of population fragmentation manifest through altered age structure, sex ratios, and reproductive success patterns. Upstream populations often show skewed demographics due to selective passage of certain life stages or size classes, while downstream populations may experience altered recruitment patterns due to reduced upstream contributions [7]. These changes can cascade through the population structure, affecting long-term viability and resilience to environmental perturbations.

Population size reduction in fragmented habitats increases vulnerability to stochastic events and demographic fluctuations. Smaller populations experience greater variance in reproductive success and higher extinction risk due to environmental uncertainty. The isolation of fragments also prevents rescue effects that might otherwise buffer local population declines through immigration from adjacent areas. Table 1 summarizes the key fragmentation effects observed in riverine crustacean populations.

Table 1. Population Fragmentation Effects in Riverine Crustacean Systems.

Fragmentation Type	Population Effect	Genetic Consequence	Management Priority
Complete isolation	Severe decline	Rapid differentiation	Immediate intervention
Partial connectivity	Moderate reduction	Gradual divergence	Monitoring required
Seasonal barriers	Periodic effects	Variable outcomes	Timing optimization
Size-selective	Demographic skew	Reduced effective size	Design modification

2.2. Spatial Distribution Patterns

Barrier construction creates distinct spatial patterns in crustacean distribution that reflect both immediate movement restrictions and long-term population responses [8,9]. Immediately downstream of barriers, populations often exhibit elevated densities due to congregation of individuals unable to proceed upstream. These accumulation zones can lead to increased competition for resources and potential habitat degradation through overuse.

Upstream distribution patterns typically show gradual density declines with distance from barriers, reflecting historical connectivity levels and local habitat quality. The rate of density decline varies among species depending on dispersal capacity, habitat requirements, and population growth rates. Species with limited dispersal ability show steeper gradients, while more mobile species may maintain relatively uniform distributions despite barrier presence.

The temporal stability of spatial patterns depends on barrier permanence and population turnover rates. Temporary barriers may allow periodic redistribution during high flow events, while permanent barriers lead to progressive divergence from natural distribution patterns. Understanding these spatial dynamics is crucial for designing infrastructure that addresses specific distribution objectives.

2.3. Demographic Consequences

The demographic impacts of river fragmentation extend beyond simple population size reduction to encompass fundamental changes in population structure and dynamics [10,11]. Age structure modifications occur when barriers selectively impede movement of specific life stages, leading to truncated age distributions in upstream fragments. Juvenile recruitment may be particularly affected when spawning areas become inaccessible or when early life stages cannot reach suitable nursery habitats.

Reproductive success patterns change significantly in fragmented populations due to altered sex ratios, reduced mate availability, and modified spawning behaviors. Small populations may experience Allee effects where reduced population density leads to decreased reproductive success, creating positive feedback loops that accelerate population decline. The loss of migratory stimuli associated with natural flow patterns can also disrupt reproductive timing and success.

Population growth rates in fragmented systems often deviate from those in continuous habitats due to altered demographic parameters and environmental conditions. Reduced immigration can lead to slower recovery from disturbances, while increased emigration pressure at barriers may elevate mortality rates. These demographic changes have cascading effects on population viability and require careful consideration in infrastructure design and management planning. Table 2 presents demographic indicators commonly affected by river fragmentation.

Table 2. Demographic Indicators Affected by River Fragmentation.

Demographic Parameter	Fragmented System	Continuous System	Effect Magnitude
Juvenile recruitment	Reduced by 40-70%	Stable patterns	High
Adult survival	Variable decline	Consistent rates	Moderate
Reproductive success	20-50% reduction	Normal variability	High
Population growth	Often negative	Positive/stable	Critical

3. Infrastructure Design Principles

3.1. Passageway Configuration Parameters

Effective migration infrastructure design requires careful consideration of multiple configuration parameters that influence crustacean passage success [4,12]. Gradient represents a fundamental design element, with optimal slopes varying among species based on locomotory capabilities and behavioral preferences. Steep gradients may exceed climbing abilities of certain species, while excessively shallow slopes can create insufficient flow cues for migration initiation.

Substrate composition within passageways significantly affects movement efficiency and behavioral responses. Natural substrate materials including rocks, gravel, and organic debris provide appropriate texture for crustacean locomotion while creating microhabitats that support resting and feeding during passage. Artificial substrates must replicate these characteristics to ensure passage effectiveness across diverse species and life stages.

Flow characteristics within passageways require optimization to balance attraction flows that guide organisms to passage entrances with velocities that allow successful upstream movement. Variable flow regimes that mimic natural patterns can enhance passage success by providing appropriate hydraulic cues while accommodating different species requirements [13]. The integration of flow control mechanisms allows adaptive management of passage conditions based on species needs and environmental conditions. Table 3 presents optimal design parameters for different crustacean groups.

Table 3. Optimal Passageway Design Parameters for Crustacean Groups.

Species Group	Gradient Range	Substrate Type	Flow Velocity	Channel Dimensions
Large decapods	2-5%	Mixed rock/gravel	0.3-0.8 m/s	1.5-3.0 m wide
Small decapods	1-3%	Fine gravel/sand	0.1-0.5 m/s	0.8-2.0 m wide
Amphipods	1-4%	Organic debris	0.2-0.6 m/s	0.5-1.5 m wide
Isopods	0.5-2%	Fine sediment	0.1-0.3 m/s	0.3-1.0 m wide

3.2. Hydraulic Design Considerations

Hydraulic design represents a critical component of successful migration infrastructure, requiring integration of flow dynamics, energy dissipation, and passage efficiency [14,15]. Flow entrance conditions must create sufficient attraction to guide crustaceans from the downstream environment into passage structures. Attraction flows typically comprise 5-10% of total river discharge and must be positioned to intercept natural migration routes.

Energy dissipation within passageways prevents excessive velocities that could impede movement while maintaining sufficient flow to provide migration cues. Step-pool configurations and baffle systems create energy dissipation while providing resting areas for organisms during passage. The spacing and design of these features must accommodate the swimming and resting behaviors of target species.

Velocity distribution within passage channels requires careful consideration to ensure suitable conditions across the full channel width and depth. Boundary layer effects create lower velocity zones near channel margins that may provide passage routes for smaller or less capable individuals. Three-dimensional flow modeling helps optimize channel geometry to create appropriate velocity distributions for target species.

3.3. Temporal Operation Strategies

Migration infrastructure operation must align with the temporal patterns of crustacean movement to maximize effectiveness [16,17]. Many species exhibit seasonal migration cycles tied to reproductive requirements, environmental conditions, and resource availability. Infrastructure operation schedules should accommodate these patterns through variable flow regimes and passage availability.

Diel movement patterns require consideration in infrastructure design and operation, as many crustacean species exhibit nocturnal migration behavior. Lighting conditions within passages can influence movement success, with excessive artificial lighting potentially deterring passage. The integration of natural light cycles and appropriate shading helps maintain normal behavioral patterns during passage.

Flow timing coordination with natural hydrologic patterns enhances passage effectiveness by providing familiar environmental cues. Flood events often trigger mass migration movements, requiring infrastructure operation strategies that accommodate increased passage demand while maintaining structural integrity. The synchronization of passage operation with natural flow variability improves overall effectiveness. Table 4 outlines temporal operation considerations for different migration periods.

Table 4. Temporal Operation Strategies for Migration Infrastructure.

Migration Period	Operation Priority	Flow Management	Maintenance Schedule	Critical Factors
Spring spawning	Maximum efficiency	Variable flows	Winter preparation	Reproductive timing
Summer feeding	Continuous operation	Minimum flows	Early spring	Juvenile recruitment
Fall migration	Peak performance	Flood simulation	Late fall	Pre-winter movement
Winter dormancy	Reduced operation	Base flows	Winter period	Energy conservation

4. Population Connectivity Assessment

4.1. Genetic Connectivity Indicators

Genetic analysis provides powerful tools for assessing population connectivity in fragmented river systems and evaluating infrastructure effectiveness [1,2]. Population genetic structure reflects historical and contemporary gene flow patterns, with fragmented populations typically showing increased genetic differentiation between upstream and downstream segments. The degree of differentiation correlates with barrier age, completeness, and the effectiveness of passage infrastructure.

Effective population size estimates reveal the demographic impact of fragmentation on genetic diversity maintenance. Small isolated populations experience genetic drift that reduces allelic diversity and increases inbreeding, potentially compromising adaptive potential and population viability. Migration infrastructure that successfully restores connectivity can increase effective population sizes and maintain genetic diversity across fragmented landscapes.

Migration rate estimation through genetic assignment methods quantifies the effectiveness of passage infrastructure in facilitating population exchange. Contemporary migration detection identifies recent movement events, while historical migration estimates reveal long-term connectivity patterns. The comparison of pre- and post-infrastructure genetic patterns provides direct evidence of restoration success.

4.2. Demographic Connectivity Measures

Demographic connectivity assessment focuses on the population-level consequences of movement facilitated by migration infrastructure [3,5]. Immigration and emigration rates quantify the magnitude of population exchange and identify asymmetries that may influence local population dynamics. High emigration rates without corresponding immigration can lead to population decline, while balanced exchange promotes stability.

Age structure analysis reveals connectivity effects on population demographics, with successful infrastructure typically supporting more natural age distributions. The presence of multiple age classes in upstream populations indicates successful recruitment through either local reproduction or immigration of juveniles. Skewed age structures suggest ongoing connectivity limitations that require infrastructure modification.

Population growth rate comparisons between connected and isolated populations demonstrate the demographic benefits of infrastructure investment. Connected populations often show more stable growth patterns and faster recovery from disturbances due to immigration effects. The magnitude of these benefits depends on infrastructure effectiveness and the degree of population limitation in isolated fragments.

4.3. Ecological Network Analysis

Network analysis approaches provide comprehensive frameworks for understanding connectivity patterns in complex river systems with multiple barriers and passage structures [6,8]. River networks can be modeled as graphs where habitat patches represent nodes and migration corridors represent edges, allowing quantitative assessment of connectivity patterns and infrastructure placement optimization.

Connectivity indices quantify the overall network connectivity and identify critical links that disproportionately influence system-wide connectivity. The removal or addition of specific barriers or passage structures can be evaluated for their network-wide effects, informing prioritization decisions for infrastructure development. Centrality measures identify key habitat patches that serve as population sources or movement hubs.

Fragmentation metrics assess the degree of network subdivision and the size distribution of connected components. Large connected components support more stable populations and greater species diversity, while numerous small components indicate severe fragmentation requiring extensive infrastructure development. The temporal evolution of these metrics tracks restoration progress and identifies emerging connectivity gaps. Table 5 presents key network connectivity metrics used in river system assessment.

Table 5. Network Connectivity Metrics for River System Assessment.

Connectivity Metric	Application	Interpretation	Management Use
Component number	System fragmentation	Lower values better	Priority setting
Average path length	Movement efficiency	Shorter paths better	Route optimization
Network diameter	System connectivity	Reflects maximum distance	Infrastructure spacing
Centrality indices	Key habitat identification	Highlights critical areas	Protection focus

5. Design Optimization Strategies

5.1. Species-Specific Design Approaches

Effective migration infrastructure design requires detailed understanding of target species characteristics and behaviors [9,11]. Body size and morphology directly influence passage requirements, with larger species requiring wider channels and different substrate configurations compared to smaller species. Locomotory capabilities vary significantly among crustacean groups, necessitating design modifications to accommodate different movement mechanisms including walking, swimming, and climbing.

Behavioral patterns during migration influence infrastructure design requirements, particularly regarding flow attraction, passage orientation, and resting area placement. Some species follow specific migration routes or exhibit strong rheotactic responses that can be incorporated into passage design. Understanding predator avoidance behaviors helps minimize vulnerability during passage while optimizing movement efficiency.

Life stage considerations require infrastructure design that accommodates the full range of sizes and capabilities within target species populations. Juvenile stages often have different passage requirements compared to adults, necessitating design features that serve multiple life stages effectively. Reproductive females carrying eggs may have specific passage needs that require consideration in channel design and operation.

5.2. Adaptive Management Integration

Adaptive management approaches recognize the inherent uncertainty in infrastructure design and operation, emphasizing iterative improvement based on monitoring results and changing conditions [10,13]. Initial infrastructure design should incorporate flexibility for future modifications as understanding of species requirements and system responses improves. Modular construction approaches facilitate upgrades and modifications without complete infrastructure replacement.

Monitoring programs must be integrated into infrastructure operation from the initial implementation phase, providing data for performance evaluation and design optimization. Monitoring should encompass both passage effectiveness and population-level responses, including demographic changes and genetic connectivity indicators. Real-time monitoring systems enable rapid response to changing conditions and immediate detection of operational problems.

Performance thresholds and trigger points guide management responses when monitoring indicates suboptimal infrastructure performance. Clear criteria for design modifications, operation adjustments, and emergency interventions ensure rapid response to changing conditions. The establishment of performance standards facilitates objective evaluation of infrastructure success and guides improvement efforts.

5.3. Technology Integration Opportunities

Emerging technologies offer significant opportunities for improving migration infrastructure design, operation, and monitoring effectiveness [12,14]. Sensor networks enable real-time monitoring of environmental conditions within passage structures, including flow velocity, water depth, temperature, and water quality parameters. Automated control systems can adjust operation parameters in response to changing conditions or species movement patterns.

Remote sensing technologies facilitate large-scale monitoring of population distributions and movement patterns, providing context for local infrastructure performance evaluation. Satellite imagery and aerial surveys can track habitat changes and identify new fragmentation threats that may require additional infrastructure development. Integration with existing monitoring networks enhances data availability and reduces monitoring costs.

Biological monitoring technologies including passive integrated transponder tags, acoustic telemetry, and environmental DNA sampling provide detailed information on individual movement patterns and population responses. These technologies enable precise evaluation of passage effectiveness and identification of specific design features that enhance or impede movement success. Predictive modeling tools integrate monitoring data with environmental and operational parameters to forecast infrastructure performance under different scenarios.

6. Case Studies and Applications

6.1. Large-Scale River Basin Implementation

The Yangtze River system provides an exemplary case study for large-scale migration infrastructure implementation targeting migratory crustaceans [4]. The construction of migration crab passageways along major tributaries demonstrates the application of species-specific design principles at landscape scales. Design features incorporated understanding of migratory behavior, body size requirements, and seasonal movement patterns specific to the target species.

Implementation challenges included coordination across multiple jurisdictions, standardization of design approaches, and integration with existing infrastructure. The phased implementation approach allowed refinement of design principles based on early results while maintaining momentum for system-wide connectivity restoration. Monitoring programs documented significant improvements in population connectivity and demographic stability following infrastructure completion.

Cost-effectiveness analysis revealed that infrastructure investment provided substantial economic benefits through improved fisheries productivity and ecosystem service provision. The systematic approach to infrastructure placement optimization maximized connectivity benefits while minimizing total investment requirements. Long-term monitoring confirmed sustained population benefits and validated the investment in migration infrastructure.

Lessons learned from the Yangtze implementation include the importance of early stakeholder engagement, the value of standardized design approaches, and the critical role of adaptive management in optimizing performance. These insights inform current planning for similar initiatives in other river systems facing comparable fragmentation challenges.

6.2. Multi-Species Design Solutions

Multi-species infrastructure design presents complex challenges requiring integration of diverse species requirements and behaviors [10]. Successful approaches typically employ modular design concepts that provide varied passage conditions within single structures. Channel diversity including different gradients, substrates, and flow regimes accommodates species with different passage requirements while maintaining overall structure integrity.

Design trade-offs require careful evaluation when species requirements conflict, necessitating prioritization based on conservation status, economic importance, and ecological roles. Compromise solutions may not optimize passage for any single species but provide adequate functionality for multiple target species. Performance monitoring must evaluate effectiveness across all target species to ensure equitable benefits.

Temporal operation strategies can address species-specific requirements by modifying passage conditions based on seasonal migration patterns. Flow regulation, substrate configuration, and channel accessibility can be adjusted to optimize conditions for different species during their respective migration periods. This approach requires sophisticated control systems and detailed understanding of species phenology.

Innovation in multi-species design continues to evolve through integration of new technologies and improved understanding of species requirements. Biomimetic design approaches incorporate natural channel features that historically supported diverse species assemblages. The development of standardized multi-species design protocols facilitates broader application and reduces design costs for future projects.

6.3. Monitoring and Evaluation Frameworks

Comprehensive monitoring frameworks provide essential data for evaluating infrastructure effectiveness and guiding adaptive management decisions [11]. Monitoring design must balance information needs with resource constraints while providing sufficient data resolution to detect infrastructure effects. Multi-scale monitoring approaches integrate local passage monitoring with landscape-scale population assessment to provide complete effectiveness evaluation.

Before-after-control-impact study designs provide robust frameworks for attributing population changes to infrastructure implementation. Control sites in comparable but unmodified systems provide reference conditions for evaluating treatment effects. Long-term monitoring is essential for detecting population-level responses that may require several years to manifest following infrastructure installation.

Performance metrics must encompass both immediate passage effectiveness and long-term population outcomes. Passage counts provide direct measures of infrastructure use, while demographic monitoring reveals population-level benefits. Genetic monitoring documents connectivity restoration and guides evaluation of long-term sustainability goals. Integration of multiple metrics provides comprehensive assessment of infrastructure performance.

Monitoring results must be effectively communicated to stakeholders and decision-makers to support continued investment and adaptive management. Regular reporting cycles provide updates on infrastructure performance while identifying emerging issues requiring management attention. Performance databases facilitate comparative analysis across different infrastructure types and installation contexts. Table 6 outlines key monitoring components for migration infrastructure evaluation.

Table 6. Monitoring Framework Components for Migration Infrastructure Evaluation.

Monitoring Component	Temporal Scale	Spatial Scale	Key Metrics	Management Application
Passage effectiveness	Daily/seasonal	Local	Count, timing	Operational adjustment
Population demographics	Annual	Regional	Size, age structure	Design modification
Genetic connectivity	Multi-year	Landscape	Gene flow	Long-term planning
Ecosystem function	Seasonal	Watershed	Community structure	System integration

7. Conclusion

Migration infrastructure design represents a critical tool for maintaining riverine crustacean population connectivity in increasingly fragmented aquatic systems. The synthesis of current research demonstrates that effective infrastructure requires careful integration of species-specific requirements, hydraulic design principles, and adaptive management approaches. Population connectivity restoration through well-designed migration infrastructure can substantially improve demographic stability and genetic diversity maintenance in fragmented systems.

The success of migration infrastructure depends heavily on design optimization that considers the full range of target species characteristics and behaviors. Single-species approaches may not adequately address the complexity of multi-species assemblages, necessitating design solutions that balance competing requirements while maintaining functionality for priority species. The integration of emerging technologies offers significant opportunities for improving both design effectiveness and operational efficiency.

Adaptive management frameworks provide essential structure for optimizing infrastructure performance through iterative improvement based on monitoring results and changing conditions. Long-term monitoring programs must encompass both immediate passage effectiveness and population-level outcomes to provide comprehensive evaluation of infrastructure benefits. The development of standardized design protocols and monitoring frameworks can facilitate broader application of successful approaches while reducing implementation costs.

Future research priorities include development of predictive models that integrate species requirements with environmental conditions to optimize infrastructure placement and design. The evaluation of cumulative effects from multiple infrastructure installations requires landscape-scale approaches that consider network connectivity and system-wide population dynamics. Climate change adaptation will require infrastructure designs that accommodate shifting species distributions and altered hydrologic regimes while maintaining long-term effectiveness.

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