

The Rogue is a Very Healthy River

By: Danielle P.

I maneuvered into my heavy camouflage waders and stomped over to the water's edge. It was gray and gloomy outside, but the air temperature was a humid 70 degrees. The river water was flowing like a stampede of wild animals and the air smelled fresh and crisp. The river looked very clear and you could see the rocky, muddy bottom. When I stepped in, the strong current took my foot with the rest of the flowing water, nearly knocking me off my feet! But I caught myself and walked out along the rocky bottom of the Rogue. As I ventured deeper into the water, my waders clung to my legs like a child to it's mother. Wherever I walked, my steps kicked up muddy dirt and smothered the water.

I grabbed a long D-net, and my partner and I traveled deeper into the murky water looking for water creatures. Wow!!!! it seemed as if EVERYWHERE you stepped a crayfish would scutter away! My partner held the D-net at the rocky river bottom, and I went up stream to hopefully stir up something. When I got about ten feet away from my partner, I let my feet do the work. As I shuffled my feet in the rocks and mud, a huge murky cloud of mud was formed from my feet and it was carried down to my partner's net. I am not kidding! If you need a serious workout, all you have to do is go down to the Rogue river wearing waders and stir up the muddy bottom! (My thighs hurt for a couple days after!) I kicked and kicked until my partner exclaimed...“ I got something!!!”

I stopped my 'wader workout' and caught my breath. Then made my way back to my partner to see what treasures we had trapped. I was extremely excited! I was hoping for something out of the ordinary and boy, did we find one! A mob of my classmates surrounded my partner and I as we stood gawking at the four medium sized crayfish and a large, squiggling dobsonfly. We were told crayfish lived in the river, but the dobsonfly larvae was unexpected. It was so crazy cool!! The larvae was about an inch long and



had an oddly shaped face with what looked like fangs hanging out the front. It reminded me of a vampire! I later researched that the eastern dobsonfly larvae are known as hellgrammites, and are the top invertebrate predators in rocky streams where they occur. Adult male dobsonflies are particularly spectacular because of their large sickle-shaped mandibles (jaws). With six small legs on the front of its blackish brown body it had a tail that was pointed like a needle. I have seen a dobsonfly when it is an adult they are very creepy!! They look like a huge moth with a scary scraggly face and long gray wings on its back. And those eyes, oh they are scary! The dobsonfly have black beady eyes like black holes trying to take you into its dark abyss!

With Mr. Stegmier's help, we sorted all the squirmy crawling creatures into groups of the same species. Then Emma fell in the water and she was soaked!! I felt bad for her! I could

almost feel the sloshing of water in my waders and the cold water on my skin along with my jeans stuck to my legs and nearly fell in myself!!

After a snack we got back in the rushing water, which was so strong! So we all helped each other in. One group found a stonefly, which I thought was super adorable! He was black and half of an inch long it had two spikes coming out of its tail and it wiggled around everywhere moving every part of its small body! The stonefly, shortly after, got a friend of the same species, but smaller and lighter in color. They both reminded me of some sort of prehistoric creature. Later on nearly everyone had found some sort of squiggling creature!

At the end of the morning we had 50 crayfish of all different sizes, 3 'cute' Stoneflies, 3 flat water pennies, 30 small transparent scuds, 1 fishfly larvae that looked like a dobsonfly larvae, 1 black leech, 20 skinny damselfly nymphs, and 5 slimy snails. After calculating with the handy dandy sheet our teacher gave us we found out that our Rogue River is almost excellent in water quality! It was 'very healthy' based on the sorts of creatures we found. I was super satisfied to hear that! So the Rogue River is a very healthy river with lots of different healthy invertebrates thriving within its clear flowing waters. But will the Rogue always stay that way? Who knows!

Sites: For the dobsonfly information go to.... this website!

http://entnemdept.ufl.edu/creatures/misc/eastern_dobsonfly.htm