

The Rogue River Critters

By Emilie R.

On October fifth, my eighth grade class completed our Invertebrate Count. Once we all arrived at school and set down our books, we headed towards morning prayer. After we said the prayer and the pledge, we quietly scooted out of the gym to grab our Riverwalk backpacks and start heading out to the Rogue River. Today was cold, but it felt perfect with our jeans and sweatshirts to keep us warm in the water. It was quite cloudy out, not very much sun, but walking the trail and carrying boots and nets was a warm workout. The air around me felt cold and brisk as I breathed it in, but also felt refreshing to be out of the stuffy school.

Once we arrived at the stream we dropped all of our riverwalk supplies and equipment. I grabbed my gardening gloves and put them on so that whatever I touched would be on them and not me. Then we took off our shoes and slid on our waders. I waited for a few people to change into their waders and then I carefully slid into the water, and waded out towards the middle of the stream. It took a while to get to the middle because the pressure from the current was so strong. As I looked at my surroundings, I realized the width of the stream was at least 30 to 40 feet that ended at a small bank covered with grass and other plants shooting out of its banks.

The air was crisp and smelled clean and fresh and somewhat woody, like the smell of a pine tree on Christmas. The water was cold and as soon as your knees were in the water the pressure of the current sucks out the air inside like a vacuum sucking out the air in a plastic bag. When two of my classmates, Maddie and Sarah, came towards me with D-nets and seines, we started kicking up dirt, insects, seaweed, and rocks into the nets. Some of the groups found crayfish, damselfly, riffle beetle, fishfly larva, water pennies, stonefly, stud, leech, snails, and dobsonfly.

When the three of us found something, I felt excited and curious about what was inside and if it might be important for the river. We found a total of at least fifty crayfish, thirty skud, one fishfly larva, one leech, twenty stonefly, one damselfly, three water pennies, five snails, and five riffle beetles. Most of these invertebrates need high quality clean water, lots of oxygen and cold water. Some of the insects that inhabit the stream didn't need any of those factors. I thought the crayfish were the most interesting because of the intricate with all the bumps and lines on its stomach and how the crayfish swam in the water. As we moved around in the water, the rocks on the sandy bottom of the stream seemed to get bigger and harder to climb over without tripping.

The water was clear as long as no one stirred it up kicking up dirt and loose rocks from the bottom. As I thought about how clear the water looks now I hope that in the future if it ever turns bad we have people either from the school or in the community will get together and help clean the water from garbage and other waste. As I thought to myself I realized how lucky I am to have clean water and helpful resources.

Crayfish live mostly in streams, ponds, rivers and brooks. According to Island Creek elementary School of Ecology, crayfish eat "*dead insects, worms, algae types, dead fish, and so forth.*" These invertebrates are tolerable in good or fair quality water. I think the Izaak Walton League helps students learn about Invertebrate Counts because students are always in a stuffy classroom unaware about what is happening around us. According to The Izaak Walton League of America website, the organization... "*is working to advance conservation, engage people in outdoor recreation, and safeguard natural resources for the future in communities across the country. Working together, the members of the League are defending outdoor America for generations to come.*"

The Izaak Walton League's primary purpose is to help give students a better understanding about how clean our local streams and rivers are. The Izaak Walton League members are preserving nature itself and protecting wildlife. This also helps us learn about what inhabits these streams and rivers.



Works Cited:

- "Crayfish (Cambarus)." *Crayfish (Cambarus)*. N.p., n.d. Web. 19 Oct. 2015. <[http://www.fcps.edu/islandcreekes/ecology/crayfish_\(cambarus\).htm](http://www.fcps.edu/islandcreekes/ecology/crayfish_(cambarus).htm)>.
- "Izaak Walton League of America." *Izaak Walton League- National Conservation Organization*. N.p., n.d. Web. 19 Oct. 2015. <<http://www.iwla.org/>>.