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## Coastal Cleanup Day Crayfish Roundup

The 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Coastal Cleanup Day Crayfish Removal Roundup on Saturday September 21, 2013 in Topanga Creek was a great success! In less than two hours, over 50 volunteers dipped their nets and hotdogs tied to strings and captured 224 crayfish in a 100 meter long reach. Everyone had a great time and is eager to help whenever we can find funding for the project. Grant writing is in progress!



Led by the Topanga Creek Stream Team, local brownies, girl scouts, cub scouts, Palisades High School students, Topanga Elementary School families, Westside Waldorf families, and Topanga Homeschool families helped capture the only invasive aquatic species found in Topanga Creek. Introduced into Topanga Creek by a fisherman who did not want to buy more bait in 2002, the population of red swamp crayfish has exploded during the past two dry years.



These fierce predators eat our native frogs, tadpoles, newts and fish. They reproduce and grow quickly, taking over habitat and gobbling up all the food. Biologists from the RCD of the Santa Monica Mountains have been organizing removal events with interested school groups, but due to the presence of our endangered trout, we are not allowed to use traps, and a permitted biologist needs to be present to make sure no fish are harmed.

In addition to catching the crayfish, the volunteers helped measure them and noted the sex. We found 114 females that ranged in size from 6-16 cm, and 110 males that were





slightly smaller on average (8 cm). None of the females had eggs, which is different from last year, when we found several reproducing for a second time.



Learning more about the biology of these creek invaders will help us understand the impacts they have on our native species. Research in Trancas Creek coordinated by Dr. Lee Kats of Pepperdine University suggests that crayfish populations increase during dry times and are suppressed when large rain events swoosh them out to sea. All of the creeks are so dry this year that the crayfish are able to take over.

All of the captured crayfish have been frozen and will be donated to Nature of Wildworks to help feed their critters.

**NOTE:** Topanga Creek is closed to all fishing, including crayfishing, unless there is a permitted RCD biologist on site to supervise. If you want to help reduce the impacts of crayfish on your own, please feel free to catch all you can in Malibu Creek State Park near the Rock Pool!