

AMAZING WILDLIFE OF THE SANTA MONICA MOUNTAINS

In December 2011 the TCWC was pleased to sponsor an informative talk at Froggy's Restaurant (special thanks to Lance for hosting) given by National Park Service Wildlife Ecologist Seth Riley, PhD.

Dr. Riley confirmed that the Topanga Creek watershed is one of the healthiest creek systems in southern California, and, like the TCWC, he works hard to keep it that way. He outlined some concerns:

- Water use by humans creates artificially high water flow in the creeks, which accelerates the growth of non-native species and increases stream-bank erosion, both of which negatively impact wildlife. *Please use as little water as possible on your property!*
- Non-native crayfish have been documented in Topanga Creek. Crayfish are voracious predators that eat the eggs of our native reptiles and amphibians. *Never set any exotic creature (or plant) loose in the wilderness!*
- Household pesticide use (specifically rodent poison) is very harmful to wildlife. *Don't use it!*
- In a two year study, 90% of the bobcats tested had significant amounts of anticoagulant rat poison in their livers. In general, the more time a bobcat spends in or near developed areas, the more poison it is likely to have in its system.

- 100% of the bobcats studied that died of mange tested positive for rat poison. Mange was so widespread among bobcats studied that the chances of any given bobcat surviving a year in our area was reduced from 77% to 28%. Typically, this disease is extremely rare in wild cats.

Some solutions:

- Seal your structures to keep out rodents. If any still make it in, use spring traps or "Zappers," poison-free battery-powered traps.
- Owls love to eat rodents, and their nightly hooting is one of the great pleasures of living in Topanga. Put owl boxes up on your property to attract them.



THE PRECAUTIONARY PRINCIPLE

We Topangans are fortunate to live in one of the healthiest, most beautiful watersheds in southern California. Open space, breathable air, fragrant chaparral, grand trees and wild critters give us all abundant daily pleasure and make it possible for us to put the rigors of the Big City aside.

Whether we know it or not, many of us use something called the Precautionary Principle (or Approach) every day to protect our families and our canyon from harm. This Principle states if an action or policy is suspected of causing harm, before it is enacted it must be proven safe. This approach is intended to replace the commonplace alternative, which puts the burden of proof on skeptics, who must prove beyond a shadow of a doubt precisely what damage is being done in order to put a stop to suspect activities.

The Precautionary Principle implies that safeguarding the environment and public health are on-going priorities. Some European countries formally include the Principle in their legal framework. We look forward to the day when this is true in the US as well. In the meantime let's adopt it voluntarily, and promote it at every opportunity.

WHAT IS THE TOPANGA CREEK WATERSHED COMMITTEE?

The TCWC is a group of volunteers dedicated to preserving, protecting, and improving the health and well-being of our local environment. Anyone who cares about this amazing but fragile ecosystem is invited to join us. Most of our activities are designed to educate and encourage residents, businesses, government entities, visitors, and others to act in support of the water, soil, and air, and all that lives here. We actively promote a non-toxic, bio-friendly approach to stewardship, and oppose the use of herbicides and pesticides. We are Topangans looking out for the natural world of Topanga.

WHAT IS A WATERSHED?

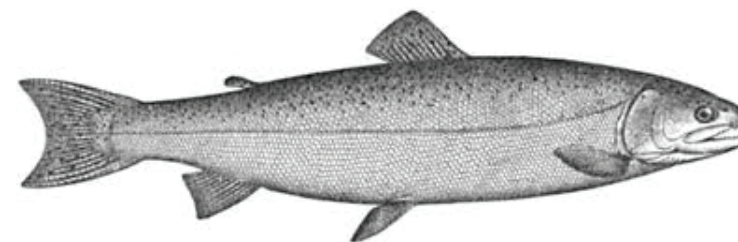
A watershed is an area of land where all of the water that falls on it drains into the same place. All living things in a watershed are inextricably linked by their common water.

WHAT IS THE TOPANGA CREEK WATERSHED?

The Topanga Creek watershed is bounded on the east side by the ridge tops of Topanga State Park, on the north by the Summit-to-Summit and Calabasas Peak Motorways, and on the west by the ridges along Saddlepeak Rd. and above Tuna Canyon. Our watershed terminates where Topanga Creek flows into the Pacific Ocean.

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

We love Topanga because it is so beautiful, wild, and full of life. Yet everything we do here – from building a house to washing our clothes or our cars to planting a flower – impacts our ecosystem. Only by understanding the effects of our actions, making the protection of nature a priority, and working together, can we make sure that we don't end up destroying what we love best.



WHAT WE DO



The TCWC meets about once a month to design and execute our programs and activities. We do whatever seems most useful and interesting to us, within the bounds of our mission. We strongly encourage you (yes, YOU!) to share your concerns, interests, abilities, and energy, and help care for the living things in our canyon and beyond.

Recent TCWC endeavors include...

- Native Garden at the Topanga Community House
 - Publication of Living Lightly, a guide to reducing our environmental impacts
 - Full Moon hikes
 - Earth Day booth and activities
 - Co-sponsor of the Topanga Talent Show
- ...as well as a variety of events and presentations...

- Wildlife of the Santa Monica Mountains
 - How to Build a Composting Toilet
 - Ocean Friendly Gardening
 - Greywater
 - Streams and Stream Bank Reinforcement
 - An Inconvenient Truth
 - Septic Tanks and Water Quality
- ...and advocacy...

- Promoting alternatives to chemical pest control
- Fighting the recent fluoridation of our water supply