When Crawfish Cross Road, ‘They’re in Love’

Excursion Thought Part of Mating Cycle

When a chicken crosses a road it’s usually aiming to get to the other side of the street. But when droves of crawfish scurry across highways, in pairs, you can bet they’re in love.

The many motorists who parked their cars along Interstate 10 near Paris Road Saturday night to swoop up members of a crawling crawfish brigade might not have realized what the movement was all about. But the recent excursion of crustaceans, which is believed to be part of the crawfish mating cycle, was not the first.

During a 1970 crawfish march across Airline Highway, a spokesman for the Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries Commission said such movements of crawfish “happen periodically and are called massive migrations.”

“Crawfish, gathered in hordes of tens of thousands, usually prior to their reproductive cycles, will frequently travel several miles on a typical migration,” the spokesman said.

In August, 1952, millions of crawfish blackened Highway 90 about 12 miles west of the Mississippi River Bridge as motorists halted to gather the shellfish by the light of flashlights and automobile headlights.

One motorist picked up an estimated 300 pounds of the species.

In 1957, three separate marches across an area on Chef Mentor Hwy., afforded travelers a crawfish “festival” as motorists filled buckets, pocketbooks and anything handy with the tasty crawlers.

ESCAPE RAINS

Some local fishermen once speculated the crawfish might have rambled onto the road to escape rising fresh water spawned by rains.

But Joe Calcagno of the Broadview Seafood Co., who has been in the seafood business for 20 years, tends to agree with the commission spokesman.

Calcagno said the movement occurs mostly in June, the fattening season. The crawfish will choose a route and travel to a new location, he said.

Calcagno added, “When they start walking across highways, they’re in love.”