

Parker Pringle, Fishwatcher

by Ann Thomas

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One of Friends' most active observers of the creek, Parker Pringle, is also one of our new board members. Since returning to Marin from the East Coast in 2004, Parker has become a tireless observer of the creek. And by volunteering on various Friends projects, he gathers data on fish resting pools, water levels, storm flows and fish life—helping Friends monitor the creek for which he has long had an affinity.

An experienced saltwater angler, he has a dedication to watershed and wildlife protection that closeness to aquatic life can foster. His bond with the Bay and the creeks that feed into it began as a child with long hours fishing for sharks in the Bay and playing in the seasonal creek at his elementary school.

During his school years he saw coho salmon spawning in Lagunitas Creek, which inspired an awe for creek life and its remarkable tenacity. His favorite destination for watching the coho is the Leo Cronin viewing area near Samuel P. Taylor State Park.

In observing creek life, he finds, “a romance with things apparently invisible and mysterious,” and is constantly “amazed that fish are so close by” in our urban communities. “I’m also amazed how many people are close observers of the creek and love to chat about what they have seen.”

Parker first learned about Friends while searching the Internet for information on “Marin steelhead.” This took him to a paper that described historical and current distribution of steelhead and coho salmon in Corte Madera Creek (it can be found at <http://www.cemar.org/pdf/marin.pdf>). He was impressed that fish lived in the creek and that an organization (Friends) was dedicated to restoring the watershed and its steelhead run.

Returning from coho watching in 2004, Parker stopped by the fish ladder in Ross and had the good luck to encounter a Chinook or steelhead adult trying to climb the Ross fish ladder. He made his first contact with Friends that night with an urgent email to Friends, sending along a video of the frustrated fish.

Subsequently, he has been a diligent reporter on the watershed, assembling a record of sightings and photos that are valuable in building a picture of the watershed.

Parker said his volunteer work with Friends has been a “profoundly rewarding experience,” and that he has found Friends to be “a driving force behind several significant projects toward restoring the creek and an important and active partner with various agencies and organizations interested in watershed restoration and protection.”

The creek’s ever-changing moods and colors constantly thrill him: the way “the creek rises and falls and constantly changes color. Algae of different colors grow and die through the spring and summer. Young fish start coming out the gravel in March and fill the pools with life. In August leaves begin falling and the streambed goes from grey to gold.”

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Parker spent several years on the East Coast, but like a salmon he was drawn back to streams of his childhood. Photo by Edward Pringle

Along with being a star observer for Friends he has produced a video of “all the wildlife in the creek,” he could document with a camcorder.

To see Parker’s video about life in the Corte Madera Creek visit <http://www.youtube.com/> and enter "The Aquarium of Corte Madera Creek" in the Video search box at the top of the page. The first two results of the search should be "The Aquarium of Corte Madera Creek', Parts 1 and 2.

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