

## Parker's Creek Diary

by Parker Pringle  
2010

It was a busy winter for Mother Nature in Fairfax, where Gary Leo saw turtles, opossum, muskrats, herons, and a swarm of bees that settled on a tree in his backyard. A mating pair of Bewick's wrens nested in a vase on his porch, hatching and feeding a brood of chicks, and soon, Gary watched them take their first flight. High stream flows during a storm left a freshly-killed raccoon hanging in a tree and Gary saw a vulture making a meal of it.

In the middle of May, Jim Bays observed a few hundred newly hatched steelhead trout in Natalie Coffin Greene Park, which means that steelhead spawned in Ross Creek this winter. He also saw about 15 juvenile steelhead trout from five to eight inches.

Sandra Guldman and I observed a crowd of western pond turtles sunning themselves on logs in Phoenix Lake in March. These were big adult turtles that had not been seen for a while and it was feared that roving otters had eaten them. We also observed otter scat below the spillway of the Phoenix Lake dam.

For the first winter in five years I did not see any adult steelhead trout and wonder if anyone else saw any. If you saw big two-foot-long trout this winter, please let us know.

My major observation this winter was a knee-high dam blocking Ross Creek near Southwood Avenue, which I observed and dismantled around May 15<sup>th</sup> during the course of water quality testing. Dams, while fun to build, are illegal and can cause major harm to the steelhead population. Steelhead move upstream and downstream all year to spawn, seek food, escape stressful habitat, or migrate to the ocean. Dams block these migrations. In the winter of 2008, in the midst of the peak migration of steelhead smolts to the ocean, another dam was built on San Anselmo Creek just upstream of the confluence with Ross Creek. If it had gone unnoticed, it would have blocked most of the watershed's smolts from migrating to the ocean that year.

Please report any dams to us and advise your young, budding engineers that dams in our creeks are a bad idea.

The winter was full of fascinating wildlife sightings. If you see anything interesting, please send your observations to Friends at [info@friendsofcortemaderacreek.org](mailto:info@friendsofcortemaderacreek.org). Reports from creek watchers help us keep track of the health of the watershed and alert us to potential problems. Send us your e-mails!



*During the past winter with its unusual weather pattern, Friends of Corte Madera Creek received no reports of adult salmonids in our creeks. The best spawning area in our watershed is in the Elliott Preserve in Fairfax (above). Photo by Charles Kennard*

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Friends of Corte Madera Creek Watershed P.O. Box 415, Larkspur, California 94977

[info@friendsofcortemaderacreek.org](mailto:info@friendsofcortemaderacreek.org)