

Life in Our Watershed

Mill Valley's watershed is approximately seven square miles in area and includes the City of Mill Valley and Homestead Valley. Its ridges and valleys drain into watercourses that lead to Richardson Bay. Old Mill, Cascade, Warner and Reed are the principal tributaries flowing into Mill Valley's major creek, the Arroyo Corte Madera del Presidio. The creeks and the bay contribute critical habitat for the diverse forms of wildlife found in our watershed community.

Riparian (creek bank) habitat provides food and shelter for the plants and animals whose survival is necessary for the health and diversity of our watershed. Steelhead trout (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*) is at the center of our riparian food web. Due to critically low populations along the Pacific Coast, the Federal Environmental Protection Agency listed Steelhead Trout as threatened in 1998.

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Spawner: The female digs shallow depressions (redds) in loose gravel with her nose and whiskers. After the male fertilizes the eggs, the female covers them.

Eggs: The fertilized eggs hatch in 3 to 5 days in cool flowing water. Silt and mud can block the flow of water and smother the eggs.

Sac-Fry: After the eggs hatch, the sac fry, surviving off of the leftover yolk, live under the gravel for about a month.

Smolt: The fish lose their markings and become more like the ocean environment. Their kidneys and gills change to adapt to the salt water.

Fry: Marking camouflage the fry and help them survive in the creek. They eat small aquatic life. Large animals are their predators. About 1% of fry survive to make the long journey to the ocean.

Adult: Steelhead begin their life in fresh water, migrate to the ocean, and return to their natal place to spawn.

Black-Crowned Night-Heron

Pacific Coast Salamander

Swallow

Caddisfly

Raccoon

Mayfly

Spawner

Eggs

Sac-Fry

Smolt

Fry

Adult

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