

# CREEK PROTECTORS

ACTIVITY BOOK #4

## CRITTERS OF THE CREEKS



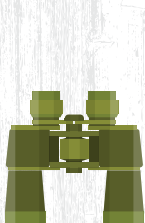
STORM DRAINS CONNECT

STREETS



OURS TO PROTECT

**AS YOU GET OUT AND EXPLORE MAKE SURE YOU HAVE EVERYTHING YOU'LL NEED FOR YOUR ADVENTURE! HERE ARE SOME IDEAS OF THINGS TO BRING WITH YOU:**



☐ Binoculars   ☐ Compass   ☐ Water   ☐ Backpack   ☐ Sunscreen

And, don't forget to grab a buddy for extra fun and always tell an adult where you are going!

## **DID YOU KNOW?**

Steelhead and Rainbow trout are the same species of fish. However, Steelhead migrate to the ocean after spawning.

Western pond turtles cannot swallow air. So they can only eat food underwater!

Raccoons can make over 200 different sounds including purring, hissing, and even screeching like an owl!

# CREEK PROTECTOR TRASH HUNT

**HOW MANY PIECES OF TRASH DID YOU COUNT?**

WRITE NUMBER OF PIECES HERE

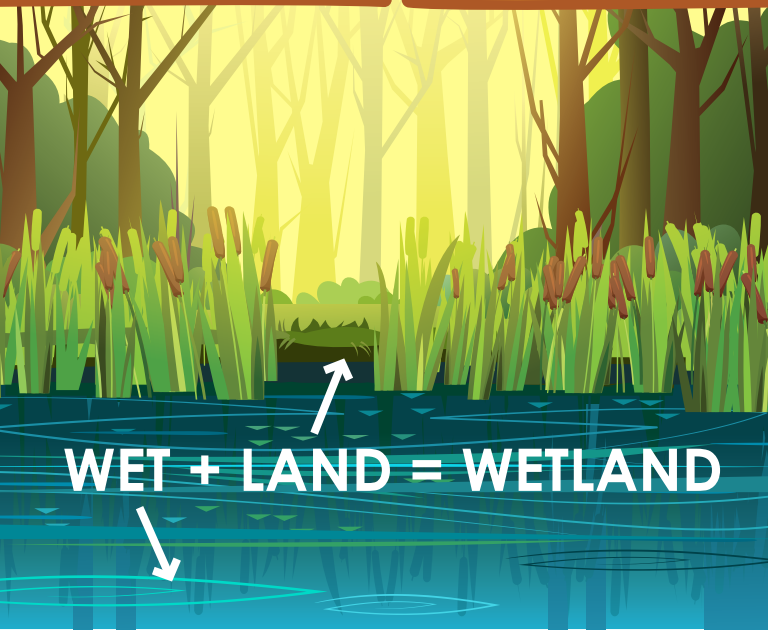
**DID YOU KNOW:** From July 1, 2018 through June 30, 2019, one local municipality collected over 1,184 cubic yards of trash and other debris from local creeks. This is equivalent to approximately 25 school buses completely filled with trash every year.



Trash and other debris swept, raked, stored, dropped, thrown, or spilled on the ground or pavement can be carried by rain, sprinkler water, and even wind into our local creeks untreated, which can be harmful to water quality and creek habitats. Accumulation of any material in creeks and rivers can impact water quality, wildlife habitat, recreation, and flood capacity.

A good rule to remember is "Only rain down the storm drain." If it is in our streets, or even on the ground, it can get to our creeks.

# LET'S GET WET!



**WET + LAND = WETLAND**

Where water and land meet, life flourishes. Water, sunlight, vegetation, and soil create a home for many organisms. Examples of wetland habitat are floodplains, tidal marshes, estuaries, and vernal pools. Circle all the pictures that you think are wetlands. Remember to look for both WET and LAND...



Photos 3, 6 & 7 show wetlands

## Creeks are wonderful habitat.

Creeks provide habitat for wildlife. A habitat is a home for plants and animals. Like us, every plant and animal needs 4 things to survive:



**FOOD** - Plants make food for animals to eat by using the sun's energy in a process called photosynthesis



**WATER** - Living things are made of mostly water and water is critical for our bodies to be healthy



**SHELTER** - Plants and animals need shelter for protection from bad weather and predators



**SPACE** - Plants and animals need space to grow, stay healthy and reproduce

# NATURALIST CORNER

## COMMON CREEK PLANTS AND ANIMALS



### *Water Strider*

Watch for them skating across the surface of creeks.

#### **FUN FACTS:**

- Water Striders run or “skate” on the surface of water, moving longer middle legs at the same time like oars.
- They have waterproof hairs on their feet and the lower half of their hind legs that do not break the surface of the water.
- They take in oxygen from the air through tiny pores along the sides of their body.



## Western Pond Turtle

California's only native turtle

### FUN FACTS:

- Turtles are reptiles and like snakes and lizards they are "cold-blooded" and need to sit in the sun to warm up enough to move.
- Look for turtles on logs or rocks. This is called basking. Sometimes you just hear a plop and see rings in the water as the turtle slips back into the water.

# Steelhead Trout

The rainbow trout that goes to sea

## FUN FACTS:

- Steelhead hatch in creeks and swim out to the ocean to live for up to four years before returning to the same creek they hatched from. This is called anadromy.
- They find their way home by using their sense of smell!
- Steelhead can switch back and forth between living in fresh and salt water. That is very unusual.



# Tree Frog

The smallest frog is the loudest croaker!

## FUN FACTS:

- Frogs are amphibians. That word means that they live a double life. Eggs hatch in the water and tadpoles are aquatic. Tadpoles grow legs and come on land as frogs!
- Tree frogs don't live in trees. Look for them in the grasses near the creek or in the water.
- Another name for tree frogs is chorus frogs because they "sing" at night during the rainy season.
- Some tree frogs are bright green and others are brown but they all have a stripe through the eye so you will be able to identify them easily.





## Dragonflies and Damselflies

Like amphibians, they lead a double life

### FUN FACTS:

- Both are found near creeks. They hunt in full sun and lay their eggs in the water. They are aquatic until they emerge as flying adults.
- Damselflies are slender and hold their wings folded together.
- Their young (called nymphs) look nothing like their parents!



## American Mink

Slinky minks are often spotted on our creeks

### FUN FACTS:

- Minks are a cousin of river otters in the weasel family. Their appearance is similar to river otters but with a slimmer build and reddish fur.
- They hunt in and out of the water and easily climb trees.
- Their long, slim body allows them to enter the burrow of prey and reduces water resistance while swimming.

# Cattail

A "hotdog" on a stick

## FUN FACTS:

- Cattails are specialists at growing in wet conditions. Their tall narrow leaves remain above water and bend easily when water gets high or winds blow.
- The "hotdog" is the flower of the cattail.
- When the flower is mature it breaks apart into fluff containing seeds. The fluff and seeds drift in the wind hoping to land in a good spot to grow.
- Some birds use the fluff to make their nests soft and warm!





1

## SPOT THE DIFFERENCE



2

Practice your powers of observation with this game: Find 5 differences between these two pictures of a friendly frog.

1. Frog 1 has spots. 2. Frog 2's eye is sideways. 3. Frog 1 is missing a toe. 4. Frog 2 has pink lips. 5. Frog 2 is missing its tympanum (ear).

Now that your eyes are focused for details use them and your other senses to find evidence of animals along the creek. Put a check by what you observe:



### SCAT

Search for raccoon and otter scat along the creek edge



### FOOTPRINTS

Observe the soft mud at the edge of wet places



### BIRDSONG

Listen for birds hiding in trees and other plants in and along the creek



### TUNNELS

Look for paths leading down to the water



### AQUATIC INSECTS

Find a safe place along the creek and watch for movement in, on, and above the water

# LOOK FOR COMMON



## IN OUR CREEKS

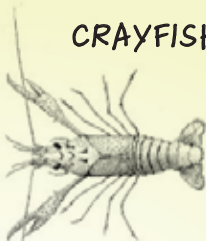
*Match each description  
with the drawing of an animal*

1. A worm that lies flat under rocks
2. An insect that skates across the water
3. A small fish found in a school in the shallows
4. Long back legs paddle like oars
5. A juvenile fly with a 3-prong tail
6. A crustacean with a bright red shell
7. A fly that lays eggs in the water
8. A baby frog
9. Will grow up to give an itchy bite
10. Loves the backstroke

MAYFLY  
NYMPH



CRAYFISH



TADPOLE



FLATWORM



WATER  
BOATMAN



CALIFORNIA  
ROACH



MOSQUITO LARVAE



MAYFLY



WATERSTRIDER



BACKSWIMMER



# HABITAT SCRAMBLE

Unscramble each of the clue words that describe a critical part of a habitat. Copy the letters from the squares with numbers under them to their matching number to complete the secret message.

## PARTS OF A HABITAT

ODOF

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6

PEASC

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5

2

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7

4

EARTW

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1

3

SECRET MESSAGE: One type of habitat is called

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1

2

3

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6

7

# CREEK PROTECTOR

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## FIELD GUIDE #4

### CRITTERS OF THE CREEKS

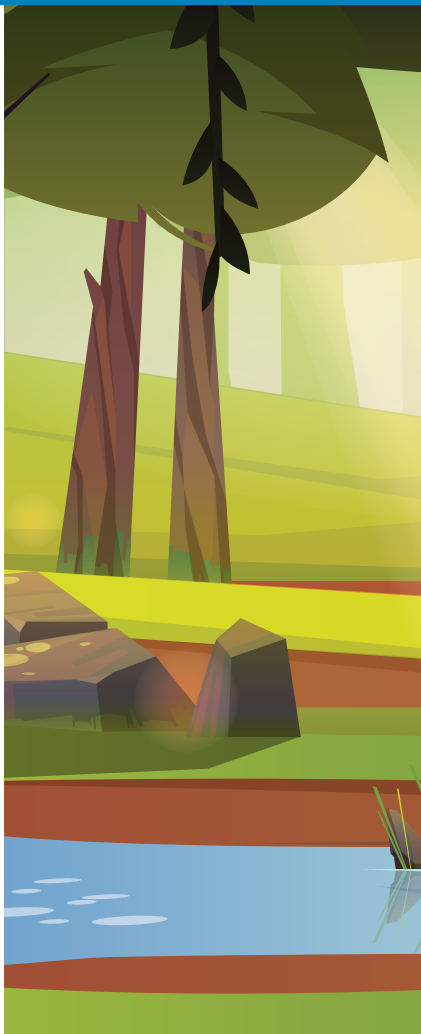
## CERTIFICATE OF ACHIEVEMENT

I \_\_\_\_\_,  
promise to help protect storm drains,  
creeks, and rivers to help preserve nature  
and fun activities we enjoy on the water.  
I will show others how small changes can  
make a big impact and will keep having  
fun exploring the outdoors.

**Creeks and rivers are ours to protect!**

Display your  
completed field guide  
to the local agency where  
you live to receive your prize  
while supplies last. Visit  
[www.streetstocreeks.org/  
get-involved/  
youth-creek-stewardship](http://www.streetstocreeks.org/get-involved/youth-creek-stewardship)  
for complete details  
on participating  
agencies.

STREETSTOCREEKS.ORG



STORM DRAINS CONNECT

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