AmeriCorps Watershed Stewards Project

Tributary Tribune

Volume 15, Issue 2

The mission of the AmeriCorps Watershed Stewards Project (WSP) is to conserve, restore, and enhance anadromous watersheds for future generations by linking education with high-quality scientific practices.

The Summer Dive Double Header By Sarah Burstein

WSP members Lindsey Baris, Sarah Burstein, Kate Rowe and former WSP member Jennifer Hayes diving on the Mattole River. Photo courtesy of Jennifer Hayes.

For the past nine days I counted fish underwater. I began counting in the estuary, near the headwaters, the mainstem and tributaries of the Mattole River. While in some stretch of that river; some inches underwater, I decided I must do as many of the summer fish count dives as possible: the Mattole Summer Steelhead Dives, the Salmon River Dives, and the Smith River Dives - a dive circuit. Awesome!

Dive Number 1: Mattole Summer Steelhead Dives

Every summer for the past 14 years, volunteers have gathered at the Mattole Salmon Group to dive the Mattole River and its tributaries "in search of the elusive summer steelhead." Summer steelhead are a rare bunch that enter the river in the spring, rather than the fall, and hang out all summer until spawning time. They're the biggest fish you'll see in the Mattole during summer. The ones that make you scream through your snorkel when you find one.

The dives consist of two days of snorkeling, in order to obtain a general estimation of the summer steelhead population and to check the overall health of the watershed. We also looked for half-pounders (12 -16 inch-long steelhead), western pond turtles, freshwater mussels and invasive bullfrog tadpoles.

My first day of the Summer Steelhead Dives was like an underwater nature hike. Joined by an all female crew of good friends, there was lots of giggling through snorkels; group huddles over any thing of the slightest interest; and of course the dilemma of what to do when you have to pee in a 5-7mm wetsuit which, even in the most desperate of circumstances, takes a good five minutes to remove. Our reach included sightings of lamprey, frogs, snakes, turtles, not-quite half-pounders (or summer status steelhead), and hundreds of juvenile steelhead.

The second day of diving, brought a new reach, a new crew, and I finally saw a summer steelhead! I screamed through my snorkel of course, which unavoidably scared the fish away. Volunteers counted 33 summer steelhead and 49 half-pounders in the Mattole Watershed over the two days of dives.

Dive Number 2: Salmon River Cooperative Spring Chinook and Summer Steelhead Dives

Continuing my obsession, I arrived at the Salmon River for the next step of the dive circuit ready to see some spring Chinook. I had been told the Salmon River Dives were epic with accounts of snorkeling over schools of 50 or more monster-sized spingers. I'd only seen Chinook juveniles and smolts thus far, the largest at about 80mm, so of course I had to go. Following a day of dive training, I saw the hugest fish I had seen since joining the Salmon Nation

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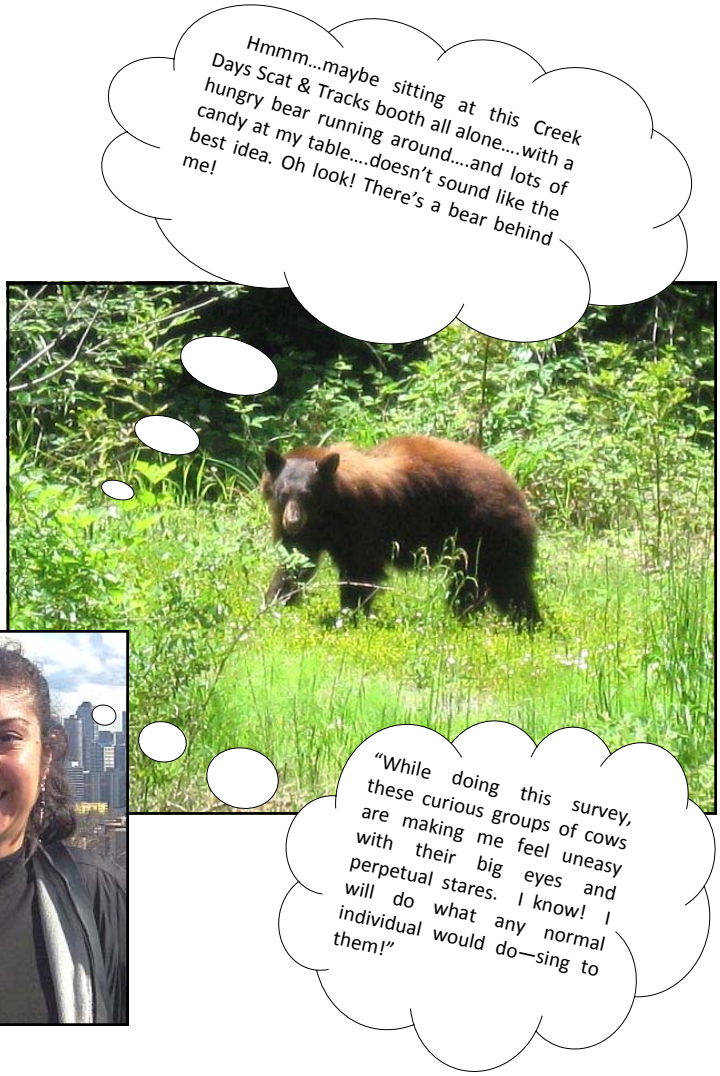
We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give. - Winston Churchill

Strange & Random Thoughts By Adriana Guzman



Yikes! That was a painful and crazy ride I do not want to re-peat! Note to self: If you ever do fish counts again on the Smith River, avoid getting sucked down into the large riffle (ironically named) 'Surprise Falls'!

What fun one can have! By Jeff Hayes

Tick, tick, tick…we waited. The GPS unit slowly zeroed in on our location. Josh, Kevin, and I were standing on the edge of two worlds. To our right was a rolling green pasture, to our left was a wild, flooded wetland. Where the two met stood the California Conservation Corps (C.C.C.).

Working with the ranchers, the C.C.C. had put up 2,500 feet of cattle exclusion fencing and planted hundreds of native conifers and willow sprigs. The goal of the project was to restore natural function to the wetland.

Moving from fence post to fence post, we were mapping the slough restoration project. March deluges had bloated the wetland next to the rancher's property. Five hundred feet of recently constructed fence was now submerged in pond water. Josh and I, Americorps members working for the C.C.C., figured we would not be able to map this section of fencing. What we didn't figure on, however, was Kevin, the Corps member standing next to us.

"I'll do it," said Kevin. "No, you don't have to do that," replied Josh and I. "I really don't mind," repeated Kevin. "Ahh, we don't want you to get all wet. Maybe that ephemeral pond is tainted with cow patties. We're not sure how deep it gets in the middle. What if you get stuck in there, or worse, start sinking? What if you fall, get stuck, or start sinking, get ALL wet, potentially drown, AND damage the camera and GPS unit?" we argued.

"I really don't mind. I would like to do it. It'll be fun," asserted Kevin.

Josh and I determined the risk wasn't too great and acquiesced to Kevin's desire to document the flooded fence section. He easily waded to and along the submerged posts, obtained a couple pictures and GPS points, and passed through the deeper, more obscured portions of wetland without a hitch.

Kevin retraced his steps back along the fence to an area where he was easily able to wade to dry pasture in no more than knee high water. Now we have full documentation of the project for the Department of Fish and Game, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and the Department of Fish and Wildlife.

What fun one can have outfitted in Corps member gear!

Naked Guy Senryu

by Jenn Ferreira

Naked in the creek
Two hab typers surprised him
In his own backyard.

MRC Opens Volunteer Work Days to Local Community By Lindsey Baris

As one of the Mattole Restoration Council's AmeriCorps members, with the Watershed Stewards Project, I have taken on the task of helping to coordinate a volunteer program. My vision for the program is to provide residents of the Mattole Valley more opportunities for direct participation in restoration efforts happening locally, instilling a sense of ownership. Due to the Mattole Valley being in such a remote area and having a very low population, I have encountered issues with low volunteer numbers; generally 1-5 per event.

The greater Northern California area entertains visitors from all over the country during the summer months. Popular destinations include the Lost Coast Trail and the King Range National Conservation area; both within a stone's throw of the Mattole. To keep the Mattole Valley beautiful for guests, I would like to invite out-of-valley folks to make a trip to the Mattole and participate in our restoration efforts. This is a great opportunity to visit new areas of Humboldt County and be a part of community efforts.

The mouth of the Mattole River. Photo by Brittany Quaglieri.

Keeping the valley healthy, sustainable, and productive not only benefits native salmon populations and plant diversity but also greatly benefits its residents and children as we continue to enjoy life in one of the most beautiful places on earth. Upcoming seasonal work will include grass seed collection, riparian assessment, seedling survival surveys, Douglas fir cone collection, and fuels reduction. On Saturday November 7, the Mattole Restoration Council's 26th Annual Celebration will be held at Beginnings in Briceland. We will need volunteers for this event!!

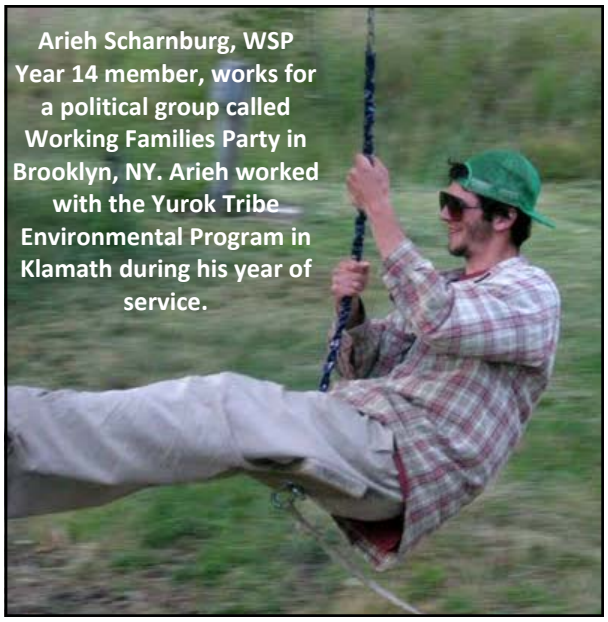
If you are interested in volunteering please contact me at 707-629-3514 or at lbaris@watershedstewards.com. Volunteer days are flexible and can be scheduled around the volunteer's time and interests. Overnight stays can be arranged if necessary. Opportunities will also be announced on MRC's website – www.mattole.org. Hope to see you in the field!

Friends From the Field!

Julie Coombes, a member with the DFG Fortuna, took some great photos of common creatures we come across while working in the field. From left to right: The first banana slug she has seen that has brown 'aging' spots just like an old banana; bear tracks she discovered while surveying a creek early in the morning; a lizard that sat with her and her field partner while eating lunch on the creek.

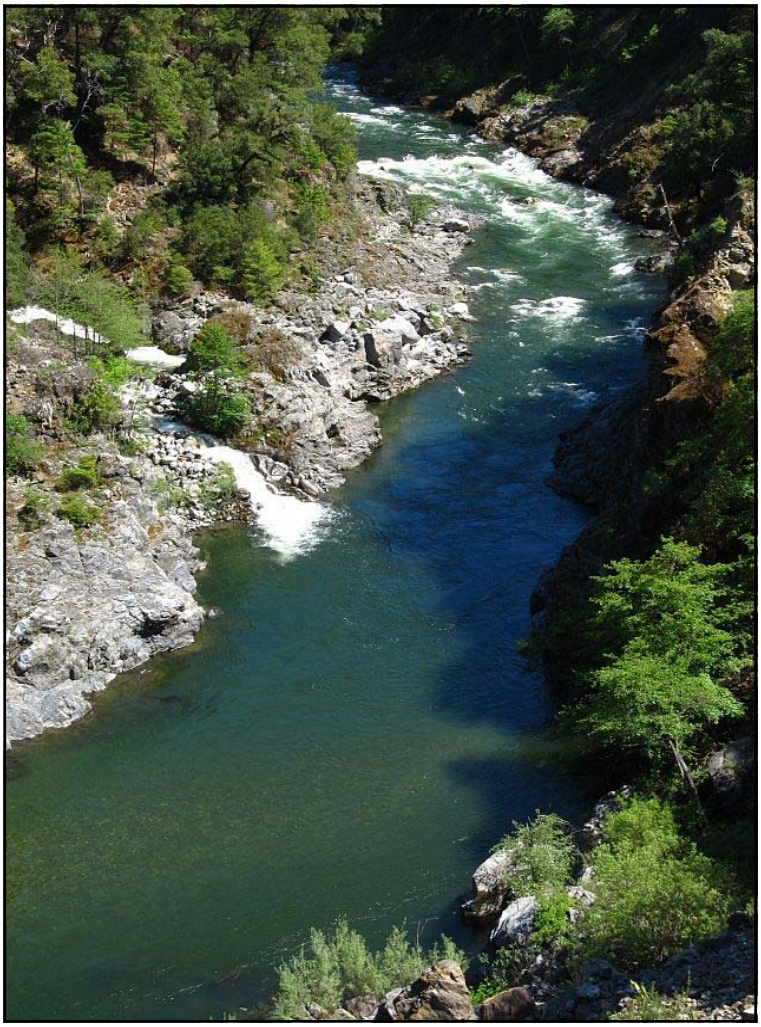
What Alumni Are Doing Now! By Brittany Quaglieri

Florie Consolati, WSP Year 13 member, is a PSMFC Fisheries Biologist for the CDFG Coastal Restoration Monitoring and Evaluation Program in Fortuna, CA. Florie started her career at the DFG in Fortuna as an AmeriCorps member.

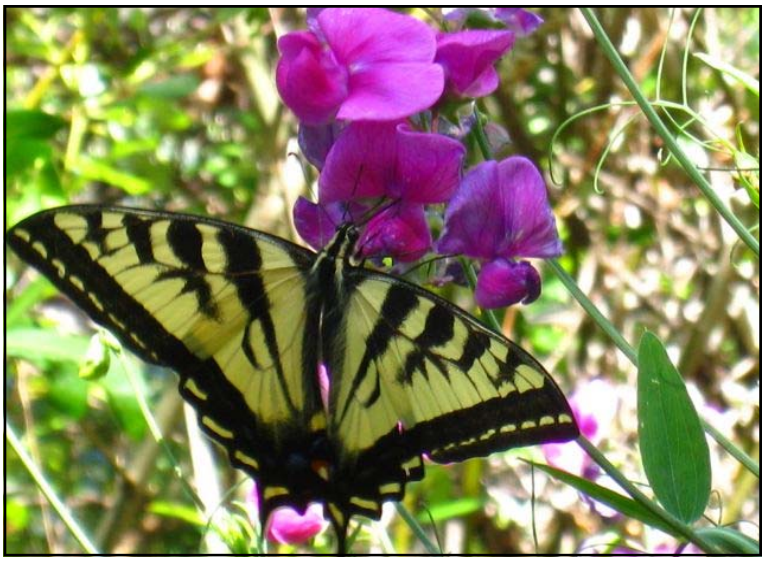


Arieh Scharnburg, WSP Year 14 member, works for a political group called Working Families Party in Brooklyn, NY. Arieh worked with the Yurok Tribe Environmental Program in Klamath during his year of service.

Sadly, 15 Year Reunion Plans have been put on hold. If you are interested in being part of the planning process contact wsp15reunion@gmail.com.



The beautiful Salmon River. Photo by WSP Alum, Florence Consolati.



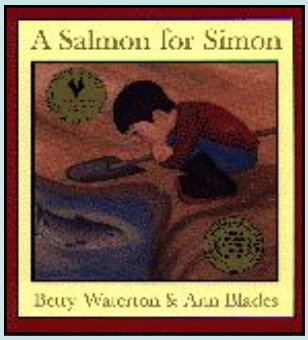
A Swallowtail Butterfly on sweet pea flowers on the banks of the SF Eel. Photo by WSP Alum, Florence Consolati.

Attention all Shutterbugs!

Start snapping away while you're working in the field, camping, hiking, and enjoying the summer. The **6th Annual Pacific Northwest Wonders Amateur Photo Contest** will be in full swing before you know it. The purpose of this contest is to bring our community together by fostering an appreciation and respect of healthy, diverse landscapes and wildlife through photography. This contest is open to all community members and WSP alumni.

The true meaning of life is to plant trees, under whose shade you do not expect to sit. - Nelson Henderson

Salmon for Simon Book Review by Kristy Evansizer and Jesse



This is a story about a boy named Simon who lives on Canada's west coast. Simon has his own fishing pole and he fishes every day during the summer because he longs to catch a salmon. However, summer is almost over and Simon is sad because he has never managed to catch a salmon. Simon then decides to stop fishing, maybe forever. However, fate intervenes and while Simon is walking back along the beach a passing bald eagle drops a salmon from its talons into a clam hole. Simon knows that if the salmon stays in the shallow pool it will die. Simon then begins to dig a channel from the clam hole to the sea so that the beautiful *Sukai* salmon will live.

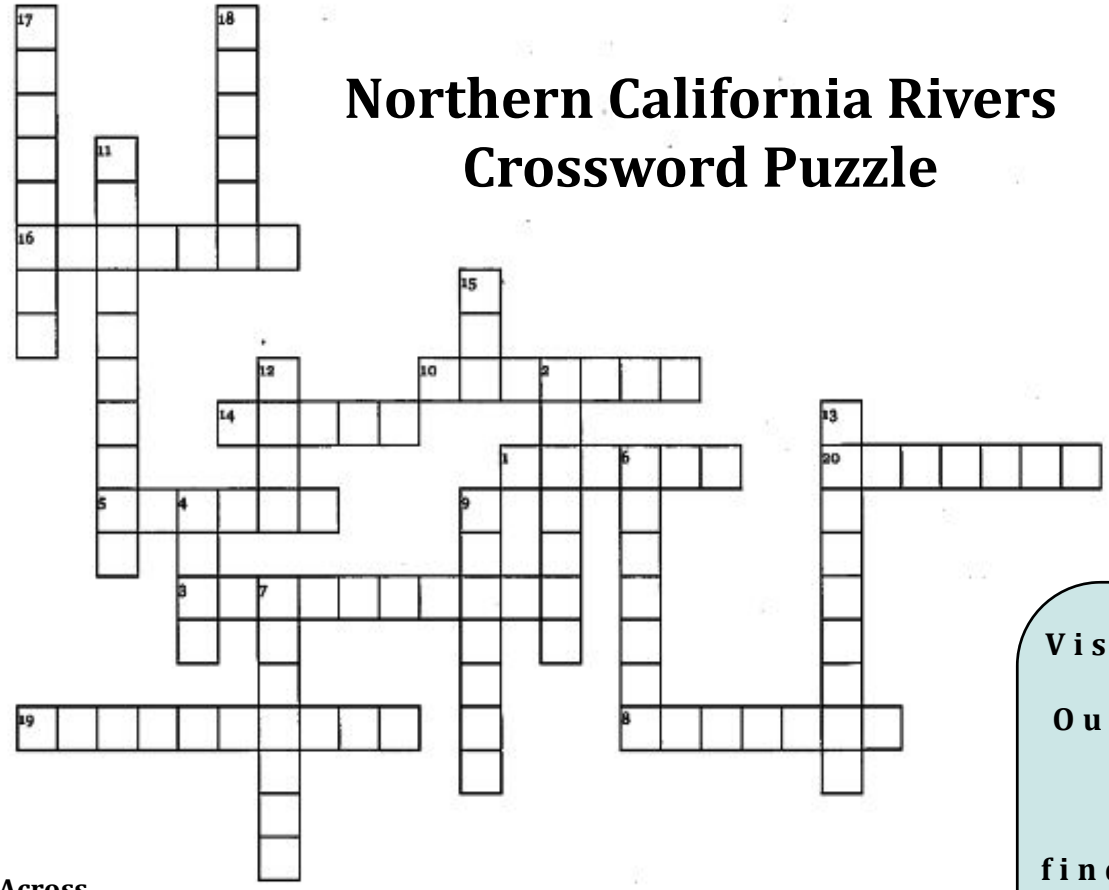
Jesse and I enjoyed snuggling and reading this beautiful book about Simon and how he saved the *Sukai*. The story illuminated Simon's burgeoning empathy towards the natural world and how he drew on his determination in order to overcome obstacles.

When we closed the book an inspired 6 year old exclaimed: "I want to go out right now and save Sukai's at the beach!" Jesse and I give *A Salmon for Simon* two paws up.

Here's some other reading suggestions from the Mothership:

- *An Island Called California* by Elna Bakker
- *More Tree Talk* by Ray Raphael
- *Salmon Stream* by Carol Reed-Jones
- *In the Land of the Grasshopper Song* by Mary Ellicott Arnold & Mabel Reed

Northern California Rivers Crossword Puzzle



Across

1. The Karuk tribe live along the banks of this river
3. An abandoned, water filled loop of a cut-off river channel (two words)
5. Rapid area of a stream
8. Transitional area between a river and the ocean
10. This river's headwaters originate in Oregon
14. Opening of a river to the ocean
16. Interwoven stream channels
19. A nearly flat plain along the course of a river that is naturally subject to flooding
20. This river meanders through vineyards and farms

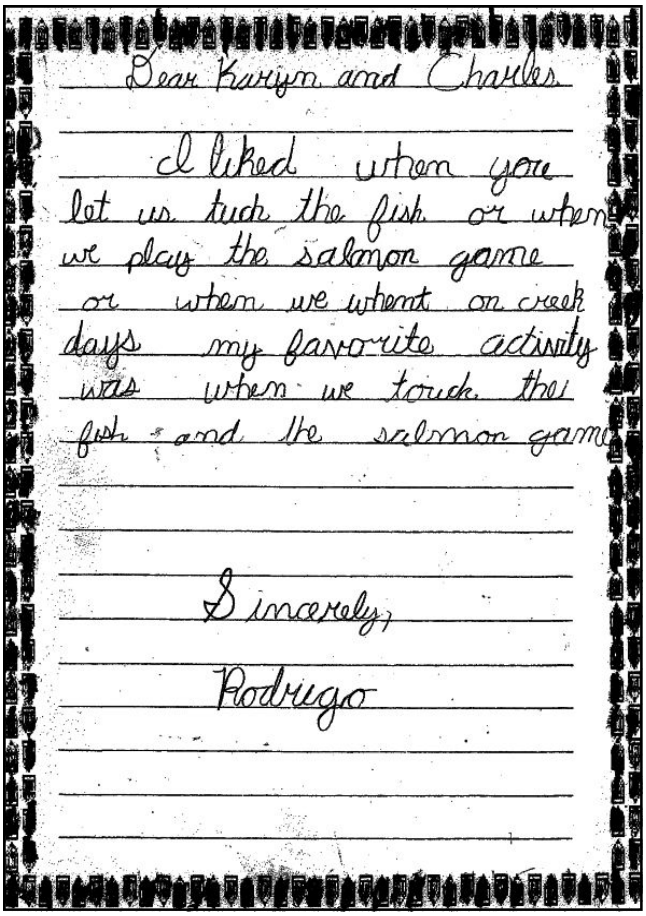
Down

2. To take a windy or indirect path
4. Movement of water in a river
6. This river was the site of 2009 Spring Training
7. Possible upstream migration barrier
9. Bed of a river or stream
11. Upper tributaries of a river
12. Slow, deep area of a river
13. Contributing branches of a river
15. This river flows right through Sunny Fortuna
17. Deposition on the inside curve of a river
18. Most suitable substrate for spawning

Visit the Community Outreach section of our website to find out the answers to this crossword puzzle!

www.WatershedStewards.com

Rodrigo's Reality submitted by Caryn Beiter

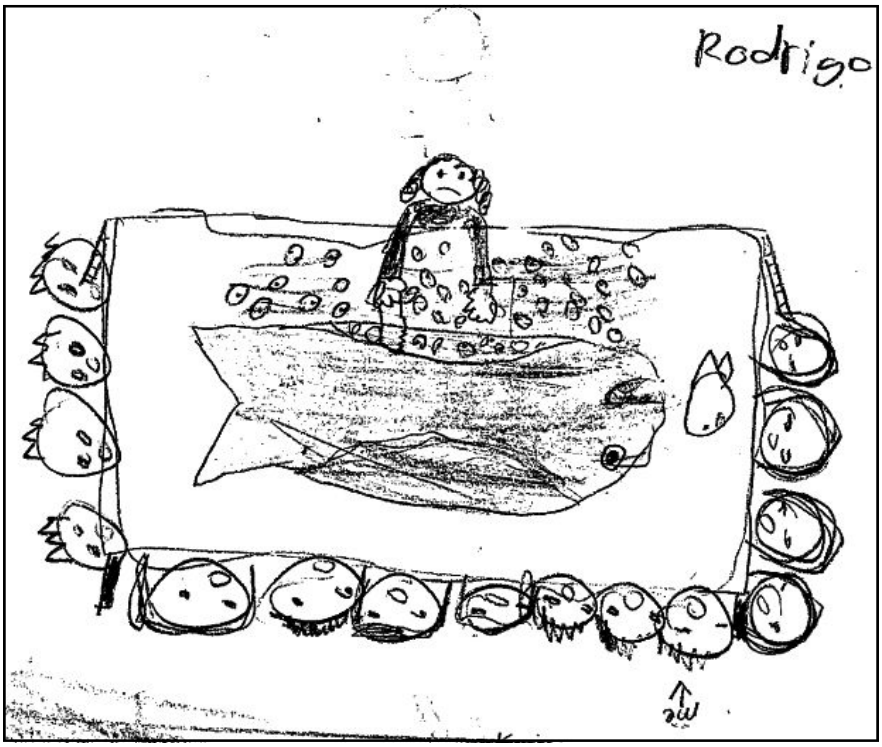

Dear Karyn and Charles

I liked when you let us tuch the fish or when we play the salmon game or when we went on creek days my favorite activity was when we touch the fish and the salmon game

Sincerely,

Rodrigo

Caryn Beiter (or Karyn, according to Rodrigo) dissecting a fish for his class. All of which are apparently astonished by the size of the fish she chose to dissect. To the left is Rodrigo's thank you letter to Caryn and her teaching partner, Charles Schembre. Rodrigo, without a doubt, enjoyed the fish dissection, especially being able to touch the fish. Caryn is the Education Team Leader for WSP, and our fish dissection expert! .



Summer Dive Double Header

(Continued from page 1)

in Northern California.

Spring Chinook are beasts; the adults are about 2-3 feet long, football shaped, with olive-brown coloring, peanut shaped black spots on their dorsal side and a forked tail. Unlike the typical fall run Chinook, a separate run of fish enter the Klamath and swim up to the Salmon River. There they hold up in deep, cold pools, living off their extra girth until they spawn in the autumn. These are the fish of legend; when people could walk across the river on the backs of the salmon. I've been told they are "the most delicious food in the world."

The Salmon River Dives have been running since 1980. Divers this year included agency folk, Karuk tribal members, local dredge miners, AmeriCorps WSP members, volunteers from the Mattole dives and people who heard about the dives and thought it would be fun. They were right.

In one of the first pools I stuck my mask-and-snorkeled face into, I got a lucky fish-identification moment in which I saw summer a steelhead (with its white gums, torpedo shape, round nose, perfectly round black spots on the dorsal side, and unforked tail) right next to a spring Chinook. In another "couldn't-have-been-planned-better" fish ID moment I watched as a young and precocious male Chinook (or jack) hovered above an adult at least twice its size. We even saw a springer making its way up a shallow riffle; body half out of the water and its tail powerfully propelling it forward between the rocks. The results of the Salmon River Dives were 527 spring Chinook, 116 jacks, 112 summer steelhead and 177 half-pounders!

With a 9am appointment to plunge back into the Mattole estuary the next morning, my run of the dive circuit sadly ended. To those who made it up to the Smith River, I hope you saw some enormous coastal cutthroats. I'll be there next year. Cheers to the dive circuit, the fish, and those who work tirelessly to make sure they can make it home again.

Please Email us with Questions!

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Keystone Communicators

by Josh Troyer

In a recent article, Wild Salmon Center President, Guido R. Rahr III, addresses the motives of a salmon-centric approach to healthy ecosystems, prescribing the popular accolade of "keystone species" to salmon around the Pacific Rim. I suggest taking it one step further – Watershed Stewards recognize salmon are "keystone communicators."

Salmon, with their multifaceted life histories, are forever engaged in an evolutionary tango with the watersheds they inhabit. This intimate relationship provides salmon with the innate capacity to serve as indicator species –EKG units plugged directly into the pulse of ecosystems. As Watershed Stewards, we've traversed many miles of once great salmon streams. It is only by these actions that we can resurface the eroding avenues of communication between human and piscine worlds.

In this most delicate of intersections, one thing becomes increasingly obvious –the efficacy with which salmon speak. As humans, we've excelled at extricating ourselves from the very ecosystems that sustain us. However, every time we lace up our stream boots and take the plunge, we are doing our best to become better listeners. In turn, we are vetting ourselves as indicators for *our* species – dedicated to the idea that we are a part of our ecosystems, not apart from.

More Strange & Random Thoughts

By Adriana Guzman

Wow, answering people's questions about accessing a stream near their property means great opportunities to learn very interesting things. I now know all about the Bay Area restaurant that is the world record holder for the biggest burrito ever made, what website to visit to see the aerial photos of it, and the 14 different flavors of burritos sold there.

Okay, I need to grin and bare it. There is a hole in my rain boot. So what? I can endure a cold, wet foot all day… on this very cold day, in very cold water. C'mon! This is not nearly as bad as the unsurpassed cold I felt while floating down the river with full waders during swift water training, now is it!? Yes, I am right. I feel better now.

Anadromous Rhapsody

By Cori, Emily, Aaron and Jordan with help from Queen

Is this the real life?
Is this just fantasy?
Stuck in Petrolia
No escape from WSP

Put on your stream boots
Walk down to the creek and see...
We're just Americorps
We like anadromy
Because the fish they come; fish they go
River's high, then it's low

Anywhere the water flows
That's what really matters to me…
to me...
(do do do do do; do do do do do)

Brita, the safety log
It completely slipped my mind
Now we're seven weeks behind
Brita, now it's almost June
La la la la La la la la laaa
Kristy, ooooooo
The TECs, they make you cry
But if mine isn't in this time tomorrow
Carry on, carry on
La-la la La la la

Spawning, my time has come
Led up here by my nose
Now I'm starting to decompose
Goodbye, everybody, I've got to spawn
(girls) Gotta dig a big old redd
(boys) Or fertilize...
Anadromy, ooooooo
Salmon gotta die
Sometimes they wish they'd never been spawned at all (Because of dams, and water pollution, and high turbidity, and the lack of LWD in the streams...)

Do do do do do do do do
I see a little silhouetto of a fish

A Chinook! A Chinook!
Can we identify you?
Screw traps and hab typing, grant writing is frightening me!

Real science real science real science whoa whoa whoa!
Six classroom viiiiiiiiisits...
45 second graders, no formal training
Seven have to pee, we're outside and it's raining I can't believe I have to sing the water cycle song AGAIN...
(break into the water cycle song)

Steelhead come, Chinook go
With the melting snow. I catch coho!
Pit tag them let them go
Let them go!
I catch coho!
Pit tag them let them go
Let them go!
Pit tag them let them go
Let them go!
GO GO GO GO GO GO GO!

Oncorhynchus Oncorhynchus
Oncorynchus means hooked nose
The DFG has a pit tag put aside for you, for you, FOR YOUUUUUUUUUU!

(Crazy guitar solo build-up)

So you think you can build dams 100 feet high?
So you think you can build them and leave fish to die?!!
Ooooh yaaa! La la la la la la
Just gotta take 'em out
Just take 'em right out of here

(Another raging guitar solo)

Oooooo-ooooo-oooooo...
La la la la la la
Anyone can see
Anadromy is what matters...to me...

Anywhere the water flows
That's what really matters...
to me.

Mothership Corner

Welcome Our New Staff Member, Andrew!

By Carrie Gergits

We have more updates to our WSP staff! Brita Binderup, WSP's Administrative Coordinator, has moved back to Tule Lake, CA to work on her teaching credential. We are very happy for her, but sad to see her go! Brita really helped organize WSP's electronic and paper files and improve our *many* systems. Her knack for organization and extremely hard work ethic has really taken WSP to the next level over the last 9 months. A BIG thanks to Brita for all she accomplished in such a short period of time!

Although it is hard to see Brita go, we have hired an extremely competent Office Manager, Andrew Ilgunas! Andrew will be taking over Brita's past duties, as well as managing our "mothership" office and all of its varying responsibilities. A native of California, Andrew attended Humboldt State University and earned a B.S. in Industrial Technology and minored in Business Administration and Computer Information Systems – our very own technology guru! We truly look forward to getting to know and working with Andrew.

Something to Talk About

By Sonja Kulstad-Hurst

We live in a society that seems to be terrified about sharing our humanity. Emotional ups are celebrated, but often times the downs are stepped around like an ugly pile of scat in the middle of the road. Life is full of challenges and hardships, for EVERYONE. It is not unusual, or weird or wrong to struggle at times.

It is no mystery that life can be particularly trying for WSP members. Grueling work, limited income, and isolation are all legitimate conditions that can contribute to stress, anxiety and even depression. We may be aware of the resources available to help us cope; friends, family, exercise, meditation, but sometimes we have no idea that there is an overflowing toolbox shoved somewhere near the back of the closet. Sometimes the closet door seems locked or too heavy to budge and then we become too ashamed to ask someone to help us get the darned thing open.

This is why I would like to extend a useful little key that you can use at any time. WSP members are fortunate to have the State of California's EAP (Employee Assistance Program) services available at any time at NO cost. The EAP provides confidential counseling services that focus on everything from mental health issues to personal finance. For more information about these services please contact EAP at 866-EAP-4SOC, or visit eap4soc.mhn.com (the access code is SOC).

Asking for help is NOT a sign of weakness or failure; in fact it truly is a testament to ones strength and the importance of destroying the taboos associated with coping with trying times.

Those who can, do. Those who can do more, volunteer. - Author Unknown

About the Watershed Stewards Project

The AmeriCorps Watershed Stewards Project (WSP) is a community based watershed restoration program. The program places 44 members in 14 communities throughout 7 counties in Northern California from San Francisco to the Oregon border. WSP's AmeriCorps members come from across the United States and are teamed up with top natural resource professionals who serve as mentors.

WSP partners include a unique collaboration of private industry, academic institutions, non-profit organizations, and local, state, and federal industries and agencies.

The mission of the AmeriCorps Watershed Stewards Project (WSP) is to conserve, restore, and enhance anadromous watersheds for future generations by linking education with high-quality scientific practices. A special project of the California Conservation Corps (CCC), WSP is administered by California Volunteers and sponsored by the Corporation for National and Community Service.

WSP members deliver science based curriculum on watershed processes and salmonid life cycles to K-12 students in local schools. WSP members also organize and implement an individual service project focusing on hands- on watershed restoration involving community members.

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