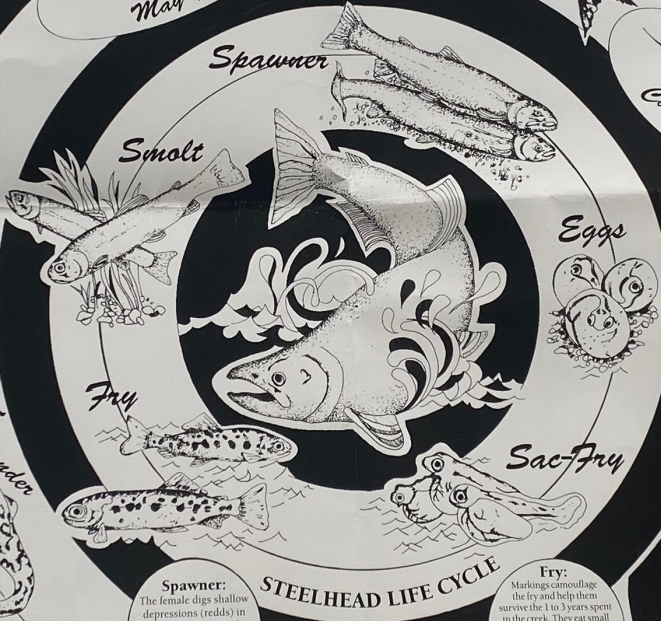
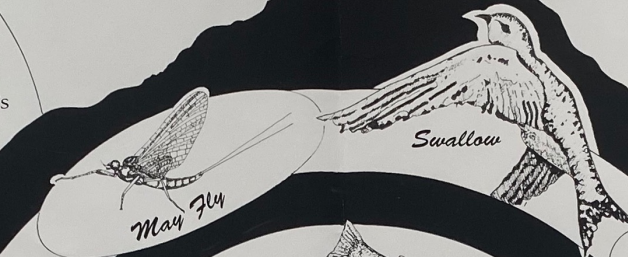
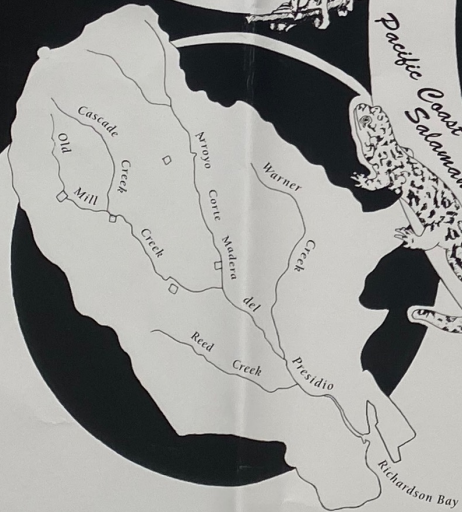


Life in Our Watershed

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.



Adult:
Steelhead begin their life in fresh water creeks and migrate to the ocean to grow and mature. After 1-4 years they return to their natal place to spawn.

Spawner:
The female digs shallow depressions (redds) in loose gravel, where she deposits her eggs. After the male fertilizes the eggs, the female covers them.

Eggs:
The fertilized eggs hatch in 3 to 4 weeks if they are provided with 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.

Fry:
Markings camouflage the fry and help them survive the 1 to 3 years spent in the creek. They eat small aquatic life. Larger animals, such as raccoons and herons are their predators. About 1 in 10 survive to make the long journey to the ocean.

Smolt:
The fish lose their markings and become silvery in color to blend with the ocean environment. Their kidneys and gills change to adapt to the salt water.

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