



# Creek Currents

Sacramento Area  
Creeks Council

www.saccreeks.org

Summer 2011

## Creek Week—What Was in Your Creek?

*This year, more than 2,000 volunteers pulled 21 tons of garbage from 30 miles of local waterways.*

Thank you to the more than 2,000 volunteers who cleaned our creeks on Saturday, April 16. Volunteers reported to over 50 locations in Sacramento County—from Galt, to Rio Linda, to Folsom, and many places in between—to clean debris from the banks and beds of about 30 miles of local waterways. A gigantic thank you goes to the 50 leaders who came to training and were at every site to greet and take care of the volunteer creek cleaners!

Every year we can be sure to pull out plenty of tires, shopping carts, computers, furniture, car parts, cigarette butts, fast-food containers, cans, juice boxes, and plastic bags. The garbage haul this year was about 21 tons.

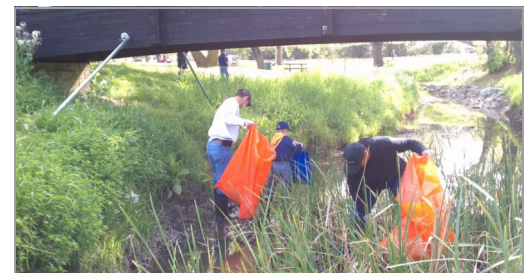
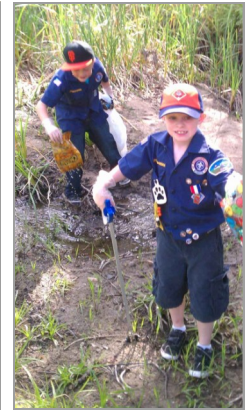
This year's 10 most interesting Creek Week trash items included:

Wig, flat-screen TV, antique table, bird cage, plastic brain, crawdad in a bottle, animal trap, rocking horse, play kitchen, duck decoy, and a statuette. If you found something unusual worth mentioning, please let us know about it by sending an email to [saccreeks@gmail.com](mailto:saccreeks@gmail.com).

Volunteers did more than pick up trash; they also removed invasive plants. Thistle, Himalayan blackberry, and French broom were removed from creek banks and floodplains to make room for native plants.

Volunteers also played an important role in the Celebration at Carmichael Park. Thank you to students from Mira Loma High School, members of Kiwanis and Lions service organizations, the exhibitors, and the other volunteers who worked so hard to make the Celebration a success!

We hope everyone enjoyed Creek Week. You all deserve credit for improving the health of Sacramento's creek systems and for enhancing the quality of creek experiences for human visitors. Garbage out! ■





### Sacramento Area Creeks Council

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[www.saccreeks.org](http://www.saccreeks.org)

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The Sacramento Area Creeks Council provides information, educational resources, and stewardship opportunities that encourage the protection, restoration, and maintenance of natural streams in Sacramento County. Its goals are to educate the general public on the aesthetic, recreational, and ecological values of natural streams.

The Sacramento Area Creeks Council holds regular meetings, develops educational materials, and participates in neighborhood fairs and public events. It works with schools, neighborhoods, and youth groups to encourage creek cleanups and streambank restoration. It cooperates with city and county efforts to reduce pollution from stormwater runoff. It cooperates with other organizations to monitor developments along stream corridors. Membership is open to anyone who wishes to share in these activities.

Creeks Council meetings are generally held the third Monday of each month at the Arcade Creek Recreation and Park District office. Please call (916) 454-4544 for specific meeting dates.



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## Native Plants in Creeks and Our Backyards

*You can support healthy habitats by choosing the right plants for your yard.*



**Pipevine Swallowtail  
Caterpillar.**

As you do this, make notes of the plants you like. If you do not know their names, take photos, go to nurseries or plant sales, get their names, and then look up the environmental conditions in which they are found.

Many of these plants do very well in our Sacramento yards. For instance, I am growing elderberry, all three species of oaks, pipevine, flannel bush, purple and nodding needle grasses, buckwheat, milkweed, redbud, and many more. Even if you do not live on a creek you can plant creek natives. These plants are specially adapted to the soils and climate of the Sacramento Valley. The best part is that these native plants provide the same ecological values that riparian forests provide. A healthy native garden can produce native insects and birds that can move into creek habitats. They also supply nectar, pollen, and seeds for hummingbirds, finches, and a host of other animals.



**A healthy habitat in a local front yard.**

Most of us have noticed the terrible decline of butterflies, moths, and bees of all sizes and shapes. Native bees and other pollinators are declining because homeowners buy landscape plants rather than the natives that take less water and don't need herbicides or fertilizers.

Check out the California Native Plant Society sales in the spring and fall (<http://www.sacvalleycnps.org>). Look up native nurseries in the Sacramento area. Check out the CNPS list of natives suitable for our area ([http://cityofdavis.org/cdd/pdfs/GreenBuilding/W\\_Native\\_Plants.pdf](http://cityofdavis.org/cdd/pdfs/GreenBuilding/W_Native_Plants.pdf)) and good luck! ■



# 2011 Arcade Creek Fish Survey

*Scouts and biologists find more fish but also observe unhealthy streambeds.*

On April 9, 2011, a team of biologists from Cardno ENTRIX led the enthusiastic Girl Scout Troop 3890 and a few young families on a brief survey of Arcade Creek. This was a reprise of last year's fish survey, which captured only two fish. This year we surveyed a longer reach to find more fish.

"The health of a creek can be seen both in the water and the surrounding landscape," explained Dr. Ramona Swenson, an aquatic ecologist with Cardno ENTRIX. Arcade Creek drains an urban watershed, so its waters can carry contaminants from roads and landscaping, and its flows rise and fall suddenly with storm flows. A narrow band of riparian (streamside) forest flanks the creek in this area. The trees shading the creek provide habitat for birds. However, the banks were steep and eroded, especially where vegetation was lacking.

The sandy streambed, with few deep pools and no rocky riffles, is not as healthy for aquatic life. The water quality was measured, and other than some turbidity, everything was within normal range. The rainy spring resulted in more water running into the creek and may have diluted pollutants some.

The biologists enlisted the girls to help check for aquatic invertebrates by standing a dip net on the bottom, shuffling the sediment upstream of the net, and letting the



**Top: A girl scout observes a golden shiner. Bottom: Girl Scouts and biologists clean and explore the creek.**

flowing water carry the loosened material into the net. However, no aquatic invertebrates, such as mayfly larvae, were found. This is a troubling sign because aquatic invertebrates are a critical food source for fish of all ages.

The biologists slowly walked upstream using dip nets and an electrofisher. The deeper pools that had root bunches and sunken tree limbs provided good cover and hiding spaces for fishes and crawdads. Four different fishes were found: golden shiner, fathead minnow, green sunfish, and California roach (the only native species). The group collected more

## Website Updates

The redesign of the Sacramento Area Creeks Council website at [www.saccreeks.org](http://www.saccreeks.org) is almost complete. Your patience is appreciated.

Along with the new design, a new blog will allow Creeks Council Board members to post articles and opinion pieces. This forum will be open to community members as well, so other voices can be included in the conversation. And comments will be allowed, so we hope you will give us some feedback.

And if you have not already, please take the time to join our e-newsletter by visiting [www.creekweek.net](http://www.creekweek.net).

Thanks for your support!

fish than in 2010, but still not as many as a healthy creek and only one native species.

The Girl Scouts could not contain their spirit of exploration. Soon they were crossing the creek piggy-back with the biologists, splashing in the water, and scampering along the shoreline looking at empty clam shells and collecting trash. The biologists shared a lesson on the value and vulnerability of our local creeks and how we can be good stewards, while the young girls reinvigorated us all with their joy in nature.

*By Ramona Swenson (Cardno ENTRIX) and Bianka Bommarito. ■*

	Temperature (°C)	Specific Conductivity (ms/cm)	Dissolved Oxygen (mg/L)	pH	Turbidity (NTU)
Midstream Habitat	12.5	0.471	8.73	8.5	11.7

**Table: Water Quality Parameters in Arcade Creek, 10:30 AM**



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*Sponsors contribute money, in-kind goods and services, and indispensable volunteers. These donations make it possible to give a free T-shirt and lunch to those who join the cleanup, cover costs to publicize Creek Week, and provide the many other materials and services needed.*

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