

# The Delta Ecosystem

## Delta Visitors:

Every year, millions of ducks and geese come to visit the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta and stay over winter. The Delta is a major nesting spot along the Pacific Flyway—the bird migration route running north to south along the western edge of North America. One of the largest of these frequent flyers is the **Sandhill Crane**. Famous for its annual courtship "dance", this shy bird signals the winter coming by flying in the Delta wetlands.

Connect the dots to draw a picture of the ornate Delta crane.



## A Delta Monster?

All these words are **used** in the Delta. There are some **really big** letters lurking in the words! This animal can grow up to 20 feet and weigh over 1,000 pounds! Its claws can swim about 100 miles each year and dig in.

Unscramble the letters below to find out who this gentle giant is. The answer is on the bottom of the page.

the WHITE N R U T G O S

## What is an Ecosystem?

An ecosystem is a group of plants and animals in their surroundings interacting and working together as a unit. The Bay Delta ecosystem is the largest place on the west coast where the fresh water from the rivers meet with the salt water from the ocean. There are 54 different species of fish, 220 birds, 52 mammals, and 22 reptile and amphibian species living there, many of which are threatened or endangered.

## Why Is the Delta Ecosystem Important to Us?

The Delta ecosystem and its surrounding wetland habitats provide multiple uses:

- **Ecology:**
- **Farm Land:** Irrigation
- **Water for household, drinking, agriculture, cities, and businesses:**
- **Water storage:**
- **Water filtration and purification.**

## Restoring the Delta Ecosystem

A healthy Bay Delta system is important to the wildlife that live there, and to the people that rely on the Delta for water. Now state laws say that restoring the Delta ecosystem and ensuring a reliable water supply **must be equal goals**. To meet these goals, water managers will work together to explore creative solutions based on input from scientists, engineers, farmers, and concerned citizens. The goal is a Delta that provides healthy habitat and water for people and wildlife for years to come.

## What can YOU do to Help?

- The Delta is a special place to visit and see. Here are four things you can do to protect it:
1. Put away your proper place, don't litter.
  2. Take pictures of the plants and animals you see rather than removing or angling them.
  3. Leave the area the way you found it. Don't dump plants or animals in the wetlands.
  4. Save water! The water we use affects the Delta's ability to function properly.
- Learn about the Delta. Restoring the Delta will take many years, so the time you give us you might be one of the scientists helping to find solutions!

## Alien Invaders!

# California's AMAZING Delta

## What is the Delta?

The Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta is where the Sacramento River water flowing south meets the San Joaquin River flowing north. The two rivers merge with rivers of smaller watersheds to form a 300-mile long mass of rivers and sloughs surrounding over 50 islands, most of them agricultural. No other single area is quite as crucial to the state's overall water picture as the Delta—it is a hub of California's two largest water projects. Its existing channels are used to provide the water outside of the Delta and surrounding areas as well

## Why is the Delta Important to us?

The Delta delivers fresh water crucial to California's water supply. It provides drinking water for over 22 million people. It supports California's trillion-dollar economy, including 827 million agricultural, including. The Delta channels transport water south to California's two largest water delivery systems: the Delta-Mendocino Canal and the

## Water Quality and the Delta

The Delta has historically been at the mercy of the river flood flows and tidal influences. Although

## The Delta Dilemma

Drinking water and other uses are critical habitat and serving water project needs, the Delta is in decline from decades of competing demands and struggles to function as a healthy ecosystem and as a reliable source of water.

## Finding Solutions

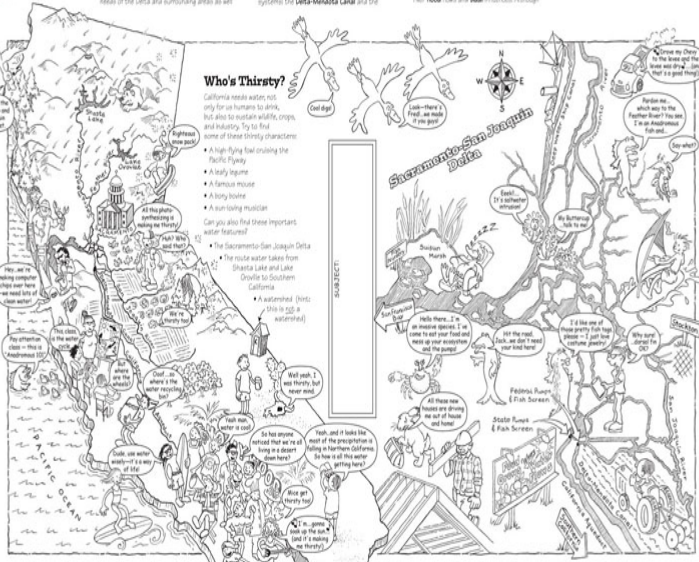
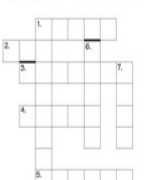
Because so many people—both living things—depend upon the Delta, we need input and cooperation from many different groups to help find solutions to restore the Delta. Government agencies are looking for ways to improve the Delta. They are also looking for ways to improve the Delta's ecological health and improve its ability to reliably supply clean water for drinking, agriculture, and other needs.

## Water Crossword

- ACROSS
1. A man-made waterway like the Delta is called a \_\_\_\_\_.
  2. The scientific compound for water is \_\_\_\_\_.
  3. An estuary is a unique and rich habitat containing many different plants and \_\_\_\_\_.
  4. A \_\_\_\_\_ prevents floodwaters from spilling over the banks of rivers or channels.
  5. The sun is the \_\_\_\_\_ source that drives the water cycle.

## DOWN

1. Water recycling is one way to \_\_\_\_\_ water.
6. An area defined by a system of rivers and their tributaries is called a \_\_\_\_\_.
7. Dam-like barriers, like the Suisun, form where fresh water mixes with \_\_\_\_\_ water from the ocean.



## Who's Thirsty?

California needs water not only for us humans to drink, but also to sustain wildlife, crops, and industry. To do this, some of these thirsty characters:

- A high-flying bird creating the Pacific Flyway.
- A leafy legume.
- A famous mouse.
- A foxy feline.
- A sun-loving mollusk.

## Can you also find these important water features?

- The Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta.
- The rock water falls from Shasta Lake and Lake Oroville to Southern California.
- A waterwheel (hint: this is 224 waterwheels).

## It's no secret...water is wonderful!

Use this code to fill in the message.



\_\_\_\_\_ is a \_\_\_\_\_ of all the people of California and must be \_\_\_\_\_ for the \_\_\_\_\_ of all.

## Understanding Salmon Migration

How long do salmon stay in the Delta before heading to their spawning grounds? When are they ready? What are their obstacles? These are just some of the questions that scientists try to answer. When we know what salmon need, we can help them better.

## Helping the Salmon

Because the salmon swim up their fat and use it while migrating, anything along the way they may use up their fat too soon—and not have enough to make it home. These studies are important to better understand how fish get safely past obstacles and see how they interpret the change in water flow that we have created so they can make their journey home, spawn, and allow a new generation of salmon to flourish.



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