

# The Delta Ecosystem

## Delta Visitors:

Every year, millions of ducks and geese come to visit the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta and along the water. 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**. Perched for its critical courtship "dance", this shy bird signals the waterfowl looking for food in the Delta waterways. Connect the dots to draw a picture of the ornate Delta guest.



## A Delta Monster?

All these words are **used** in the Delta. There are some **really big** letters lurking in the water! The animal can grow up to 20 feet and weigh over 1000 pounds! Do you see what about this great beast? It's a **big** letter!

Unscramble the letters below to find out who this beastie part 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:

- food and jobs
- 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 water in its proper place, don't spill.
  2. Take pictures of the plants and animals you see rather than removing or displacing them.
  3. Leave the area the way you found it. Don't dump plants or animals in the waterways.
  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



- Find these words:
- |            |             |
|------------|-------------|
| ANADROMOUS | SAN JOAQUIN |
| AQUEDUCT   | RESERVOIR   |
| DAM        | RIDGEPATH   |
| DELTA      | SACRAMENTO  |
| ECOSYSTEM  | SALINITY    |
| FLOOD      | SHRIMP      |
| LEVEE      | SPAWN       |
| MIGRATE    | TIDAL       |

## Which Way Did They Go?

Salmon are a species of fish that are born in fresh water, but **migrate** to the salt water oceans where they spend most of their adult life. These fish are called **anadromous**. When salmon are ready to lay their eggs or **spawn**, the Delta provides a route for them as they travel back to the ocean. Central Valley streams where they were hatched, whether north or south of the Delta. As water flows in the Delta, floating "logs" can be very helpful. The water in the Delta changes with storm runoff, dam releases, and the tide. It is among the thousands and thousands of salmon that can navigate through this area successfully.

## Understanding Salmon Migration

How long do salmon stay in the Delta before traveling 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.

## 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 waterways to form a 300-mile long maze 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 inside 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 to 827 million agricultural industry. 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

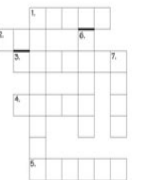
Restoring water quality is an essential habitat and serving water project goals, the Delta is in decline from decades of competing demands and struggles to function as a healthy ecosystem and as a reliable source of water.

## Finding Solutions

Because so many people—both other 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. They are also looking for ways to improve the Delta.

## Water Crossword

- ACROSS
1. A man-made waterway like the Delta.
  2. The scientific compound for water.
  3. An estuary is a unique and rich habitat containing many different plants and animals.
  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.
  2. An area defined by a system of rivers and their tributaries is called a \_\_\_\_\_.
  3. Dam-like structures, like the Sutter, form where fresh water mixes with \_\_\_\_\_ water from the ocean.



## Who's Thirsty?

California needs water not only for its 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 tiny house.
- A sun-loving musician.

## 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 22 a waterwheel).

## Helping the Salmon

Because the salmon swim up their feet and use it while migrating, anything along the stream, they may use up their fuel too soon—and not have enough to make it home.

These studies are important to better understand how fish get safely past obstacles and 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.

## 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.



Program provided by California State Water Resources and Water Conservation Council. For more information, visit us at <http://www.water.ca.gov> and call 1-800-WATER-FACTS and Fax us.