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 mixes with the salt water from the ocean. There are 14 different species of fish, 22 birds, 52 mammals, and 22 reptiles 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:
- farmland for crops
- water for households, 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. New state laws say that restoring the Delta’s ecosystem and ensuring a reliable water supply must be equal goals. To meet these two 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 trash in its proper place. Don’t litter.
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 disturb plants or animals in the wetlands.
4. Save water! Water we use affects the Delta’s ability to function properly.

5) Learn about the Delta. Restoring the Delta will take many years, so by the time you grow up, you might be one of the scientists helping to find solutions!

Alien Invaders!

Over 200 non-native species — which include animals, plants, and microorganisms — have been introduced to the Delta and stayed. A great majority of these non-Californian species have upset the natural balance of the ecosystem by competing and crowding out the California natives. One of these troublesome pests is hidden in the picture below. Follow the instructions to find out what it is. (The answer is at the bottom of the page.)

Instructions: Color each numbered area using the following code:
1) Blue
2) Brown
3) Red

A Delta Monster?

No. There aren’t any real monsters in the Delta, but there are some really big critters lurking in its waters. This animal can grow up to 20 feet and weigh over 2,000 pounds! Its cousin, seen swimming about the Delta, doesn’t get quite so big.

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

N R U G O S E

the WHITE __ __ __ __ __ __ __ __

Fishy Maze:

The Delta is a vast maze of islands and waterways that provide the pathway for adult salmon to spawn upriver and then young to travel back to the ocean as fry. Besides being a pathway, the Delta gives the young salmon a place to eat, grow, and adapt to the saltier ocean water, giving them a better chance for survival.

Our friendly Sally Salmon has just spent the summer out in the Pacific Ocean and needs to navigate her way back to the freshwater stream from where she hatched. Can you help her find the way home to “HAPPY RIVER.”?

Answers:

1-Blue     2-Brown

Instructions to find out what it is. (The answer is at the bottom of the page.)

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1) Blue
2) Brown