

In the Watershed

By Darcy Aston, Carpinteria Creek Watershed Coalition

What other community in Southern California can claim a creek that flows from the mountains to the ocean without being channelized, and is home to endangered steelhead trout? Or surrounds a healthy salt marsh that hosts hundreds of species of birds? Or joined together to preserve ocean top bluffs in the face of development pressures? The Carpinteria Valley watersheds can claim all of these unique features, which include some of the healthiest wetlands along the Southern California coast.

A watershed is an area of land that drains to a single body of water, in our case the Pacific Ocean. We all live in a watershed, even if we're not right next to a creek, which means that anything we do can affect the health of the watershed. In the Carpinteria Valley, the primary watersheds are the Santa Monica, Franklin, and Carpinteria creeks. Do you know which watershed you live in, where that creek enters the ocean or where you might expect to see steelhead trout or nesting red-winged blackbirds? Finding out more about the watershed you live in can connect you to the land, the environment and your community in a way that may surprise you.

Each week, this column will introduce you to some of the unique aspects of our local watersheds, and tell you about ways you can get involved in improving and protecting natural areas. Topics will range from helping you find the local creeks, to salt marsh restoration, local birdwatching opportunities and water quality issues. The column will be written each week by members of different local groups, including the Carpinteria Creek Watershed Coalition, the Carpinteria Creek Committee, the Carpinteria Salt Marsh docents, and friends of the Carpinteria Bluffs, as well as researchers from UC Santa Barbara. Each group has a slightly different focus, but all are concerned with protecting the beauty and diversity of our local creeks and wetlands, which make Carpinteria a great place to live. We look forward to sharing the Carpinteria watersheds with you.