

## MORE FISH...

Steelhead trout, stickleback, speckled dace, Pacific lamprey, and sculpin are all native to SLO creek. Introduced species include bass, sunfish, carp, bluegill, mosquitofish, bullhead shiners and minnows.

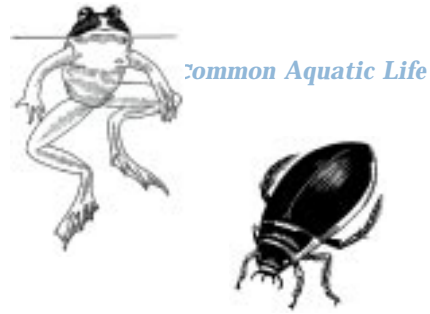


**Pacific Lamprey** have a round, elongate, flexible cartilaginous body, and skin with no scales. Lamprey are very smooth and slimy to the touch. The mouth is down-turned and adapted for clinging and sucking to the surface of other fish. Lamprey are partially parasitic and feed off the flesh of host fish that they attach to.

**Sculpins** are found in both fresh and salt water. Freshwater Sculpins are small, bottom-dwelling fish with large flattened heads, thin tapering bodies, and large pectoral fins. The eyes are located high on the head. The gill cover usually has one or more spines. Adult Sculpin are 3-4 inches (10 cm) in length.



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Common Aquatic Life

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San Luis Obispo Creek



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# SAN LUIS OBISPO CREEK

## FISH

### Steelhead/Rainbow Trout

Steelhead are the migratory form of resident rainbow trout. They rear in freshwater, migrate to the ocean where they mature, and finally return to freshwater as adults to spawn.



Each female can lay over 2000 eggs in the gravel of the creek bed.

After 6 weeks of incubation the eggs hatch and juvenile fish (called alevins) emerge. When the fish reach 9 cm they are known as parr. The parr may stay in the creek for up to 3 years until they undergo the physiological changes required for life in the ocean, after which the juveniles migrate back out to sea to mature.

### Speckled Dace

Dace live in a variety of habitats, but normally prefer shallow, cool and slower moving waters. They spawn in the spring and lay eggs over the gravelly creek bottom. Each female produces from 200 to 500 eggs. This benthic (bottom living) species is an omnivore, feeding on aquatic insects, plant material, and zooplankton. Speckled dace serve as forage (food) fish for trout and other game species.



### Three-Spine Stickleback

The three-spine stickleback is found in most streams along the California coast. They are small fish, usually no longer than 8 cm, and have three sharp spines on their back. The spines are primarily used in defense as they make the fish difficult for predators to swallow.



Like steelhead trout, three-spine stickleback are anadromous, meaning that they are able to spend part of their lifecycle in freshwater and part in saltwater. Most sticklebacks residing in freshwater complete their life cycle in one year. However, anadromous populations that exploit the marine environment can survive more than a year because of the abundant supply of food found in the ocean.

### Carp

The common carp is not native to San Luis Obispo creek. It is regarded as a pest fish because of its widespread abundance and destructive behavior. Carp have a tendency to increase water turbidity by dislodging plants and rooting around in the substrate, causing a deterioration of habitat for species requiring good vegetation and clean water.



There is also evidence that common carp prey on the eggs of other fish species, and compete with native species for habitat. Once established in a water system carp are very difficult to remove.

## BIRDS

### Belted Kingfisher

The Belted Kingfisher is bluish gray in color with a distinctive broad white collar, large head with a bushy crest, and spear shaped bill. Perhaps the most distinctive feature of the bird is the loud chattering call that carries well across the water.



This Kingfisher breeds in lakes, streams and saltwater estuaries throughout the United States. The diet consists mainly of fish, crabs, crayfish, salamanders, lizards, mice and insects. Squid and oysters are also eaten in their marine habitats.

### Mallard Duck

Mallards are common wild ducks that live in northern hemisphere wetlands. Most domestic ducks were bred from mallards. Males are brightly colored, having a green head, a white collar, and a bright yellow bill. Females are mottled brown with a brown bill. Mallards have a varied diet, eating insects, worms, frogs, snails, slugs, small shellfish, and aquatic plants.



Mallards build cup-like nests made of grass and leaves; they are lined with duck down (delicate feathers). Nests are usually on the ground in dense undergrowth. Females lay 5-14 greenish-white eggs in each clutch (a set of eggs laid at one time), and the female cares for the young.

### Cinnamon Teal

The male cinnamon teal has a cinnamon-red head, neck, breast, and belly. They have an iridescent green patch on the wing, which is separated from a bluish shoulder patch by a white stripe. The back, rump, and tail are a dull brown color and the under tail is black. They have a distinctive red eye, black bill, and yellow legs and feet.

Female cinnamon teal are often confused with female blue-winged teal. They have a duller blue shoulder patch, an overall rustier color, and are more heavily streaked.



## INVERTEBRATES

### Diving Beetle

These beetles are predatory; feeding on other insects, larvae, and they will even eat small fish. Adults are very good swimmers and catch most of their prey live, eating it whole or tearing it to pieces with their strong mandibles (jaws).



Predacious diving beetles are excellent swimmers. They have a very smooth and streamlined exoskeleton. Their hind legs are covered with long hairs called 'natatory setae', which they use like flippers. The adults hibernate in the mud on the creek bed during a large part of the year, but are usually active in spring, when they feed on the abundant insects that emerge at this time.

### Water Strider

The water strider is a true bug that can run across the surface of water. It lives in ponds and slow-running streams. It rarely goes underwater. The underside of the body is covered with water-repellent hair.



Like all insects, water striders have a three-part body (head, thorax and abdomen), six jointed legs, and two antennae. They have a long, dark, narrow body. Some water striders have wings, others do not. Most are over 0.2 inch (5 mm) long. The long middle legs move this bug across the surface of the water like paddles. The long hind legs steer them and act as brakes, their short front legs are used to catch prey.

### Crayfish

Crayfish are not natives of San Luis Obispo creek, but were introduced many years ago. They can be seen walking along the bottom by means four pairs of jointed legs. If disturbed, a crayfish will dart backwards with rapid jerks of its muscular tail. Unlike most animals which have their skeletons on the inside of the body, these crustaceans have their hard parts on the outside. This exoskeleton protects the soft inner tissues.



Crayfish hunt primarily at night, they can often be seen with their feelers extended, lying in wait for any unsuspecting prey that might wander by. Insects, larvae, tadpoles and even small frogs may be seized by the large pair of claws that crayfish possess and will be quickly ripped apart and devoured by this voracious predator.

## REPTILES & AMPHIBIANS

### Southwestern Pond Turtle

Southwestern pond turtles prefer quiet waters of ponds, small lakes, streams, and marshes and require basking sites such as submerged logs, rocks, mats of floating vegetation, or open mud banks. Pond turtles will only inhabit reaches of creeks that contain deep pools and abundant underwater cover.

Along the central coast, mating occurs during April to May, and eggs are laid from March thru August within nests constructed in sandy banks. Incubation of eggs takes approximately 3 months, with young turtles reaching sexual maturity in about eight years. Southwestern pond turtles are omnivores, feeding on vegetation, insects, fishes, frogs, and carrion.



### Bull Frog



Bull Frogs are not native to the Western U.S. They are highly aquatic, and never stray far from water. They prefer water with thick aquatic vegetation and can even tolerate brackish (salty) water. Breeding occurs from February thru July in permanent water bodies. Eggs are spread out in a large thin sheet

which is attached to submerged vegetation. Larvae hatch and reach lengths of 8 cm or more before metamorphosing. Some larvae may over-winter before transforming into frogs.

