

# Voices of Muir Beach

## A Quest Along Redwood Creek



While visiting Muir Beach today, you may want  
To learn of this place through this fun treasure hunt!  
Follow the directions and read the rhyme --  
You'll only need about 30 minutes of time.

Along the way, creatures that call Muir Beach home  
will tell you why it's such a special place to roam.  
At the end of your time at the beach here today  
Hides something special for you to take away.

First, clues inside tell you where to walk,  
Then the animals and landscape will talk.  
Read the Naturalist's Corner to get just the facts --  
Remember, you're at the beach, so have fun and relax!

*Towis' awwe!* (A traditional Coast Miwok welcome)

Welcome to Muir Beach –  
a wonderful place to be!

Where fresh water  
from Redwood Creek  
meets salt of the sea.



All kinds of life make their home in this place,  
from giant gray whales to macroinvertebrates!

For you, this is a great place to play --  
but for them this is the place they stay.

Now, turn to the north: see if you can find the open hillside and  
Dias Ridge line. Shhh. Listen...

**Dias Ridge** speaks:

“On this Quest there’s an up and down motion  
that connects Mt. Tamalpais with the Pacific Ocean.  
Where does my watershed begin?  
With fog and rain and groundwater within.  
Tributaries join forces into Redwood Creek,  
Flowing downstream, it’s the ocean they seek.”

## Naturalist's Corner

A watershed describes how water flows from ridge tops down into valleys. As the watershed flows out to sea it carries rocks, sticks, seeds and animals to new places. Overtime, this process of water flow shapes the land and gives form to the watershed.

Now, walk towards the ocean, away from the ridge  
And stop at the turn of the faux (fake) wood bridge.

**Great Blue Heron** speaks:

“Once this area was choked up with weeds  
But now it’s restored because of good deeds.  
Friends of Muir Beach restored this floodplain  
Can you see all the sedges us birds have gained?”



## Naturalist's Corner

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Volunteers have planted over 20,000 native plants in this newly created floodplain. This will provide an area of slower current in Redwood Creek during floods, preventing baby fish from being washed out to sea. During winter rains, the creek banks overflow and spread into the floodplain. During dry summer months, the creek recedes. This cycle of ebb and flow is an important part of the watershed's health, upon which many plants and animals depend.

You don't have to linger here for a week!  
The treasure you seek next is Redwood Creek.

**Arroyo Willow** (*tiwut* or *tcaiwa*) speaks:

"Willows and alders form a bright jade glade  
Providing creek and wildlife with welcome shade.  
Both of us trees love to have wet feet:  
You'll always find us at the side of a creek.  
Coast Miwok bend our branches into baskets and snares  
Listen for song birds – of your presence they're aware."



## Naturalist's Corner

The Coast Miwok Indians have lived here for thousands of years. Many of these plants are used for food, medicine, clothing and shelter. Can you imagine coming to Redwood Creek to gather these things, instead of going to the store like we do today? The plants that grow along Redwood Creek are also important places for birds, fish, and other animals. During the dry California summer many critters come to this creek to get water.

Out of the shade, under the sky you'll be soon  
Turn right from the bridge to the sign about dunes.

**Sand speaks:**

"I washed downstream. I was blown back, too!  
Plants work hard to keep me here with you.  
Beach bur and sand verbena – they anchor me in.  
And keep me from blowing off in strong ocean wind."



## Naturalist's Corner

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Sand dunes never stop moving - they are shaped by tides and winds. Dune grass and ground-hugging mats of beach bur and yellow sand verbena make their homes on the dunes. These plants help hold the sand dune together. Many plant species that inhabit dunes have small white hairs covering them to reflect sunlight and conserve water.

Stay close to the willows anchoring the dunes on your right,  
And follow the fence posts until the lagoon is in sight.

**Water speaks:**

“Winter storms and monthly moons  
Pull salty tides up into my lagoon.  
Where picnic blankets were once spread  
I get to stretch out and slow down instead.  
As winter rains flood into this space  
It gives young fish a hiding place.  
Look to my surface: perhaps it is showing  
The direction the coastal wind is blowing.



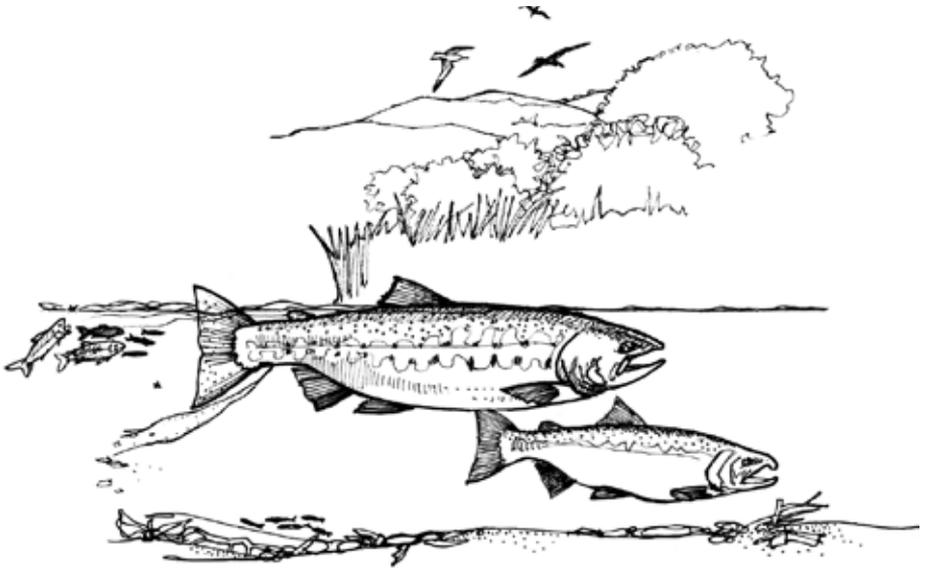
## Naturalist's Corner

One of the earth's most fertile habitats is where freshwater streams meet saltwater tides, called estuaries. The estuary is the entrance to the watershed for spawning salmon and an important stop for migrating ducks and shorebirds on their way to the Pacific Flyway. During heavy winter storms the lagoon at Muir Beach opens to the ocean's influence.

Follow the water that is always in motion  
Stop where the creek wants to meet the ocean

**Salmon speaks:**

"In spring, I swim downstream as a tiny smolt.  
I won't pass here again until I'm an adult.  
Two years in between, I'll spend out at sea  
Getting as big as I can be, eating whatever I can see --  
And hoping that others don't come and eat me!  
When the first winter rains fill up my creek,  
And fresh water flows to sea from high mountain peaks  
I return once again to the place of my birth  
I spawn then give my body back to the earth.



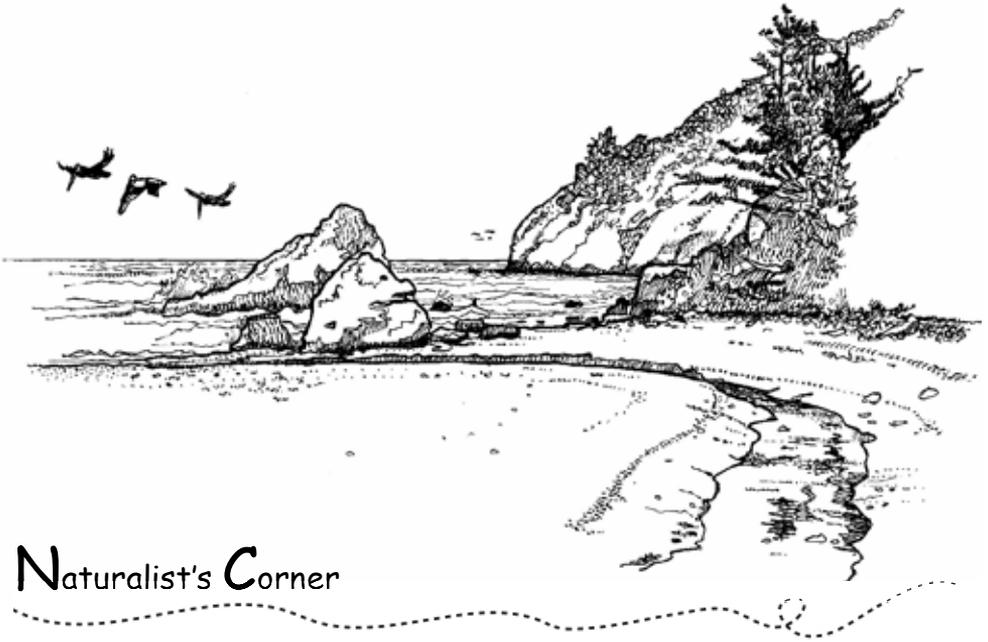
## Naturalist's Corner

You may see fish breaking the surface of the lagoon. These are likely federally threatened steelhead trout or endangered coho salmon. Lagoons provide young fish protection during storms and plenty of places to hunt for food as they get ready to go to sea. For adults returning to spawn, the lagoon is a nice deep spot to wait for winter storms to pass and creek levels to rise.

As you spend some time at Muir Beach  
I hope you've let this poem teach  
You things you didn't know before.  
There are so many things here to explore!

Now take some time to relax,  
Forget about school and income tax!  
Look for beach wrack along the shore,  
Or spot a bird flying high ever more.  
Follow tracks in the sand and go for a hike  
You might find an amazing view that you really like!

When you're ready to leave Muir Beach  
Continue on to Page 8 to find the Quest treasure.



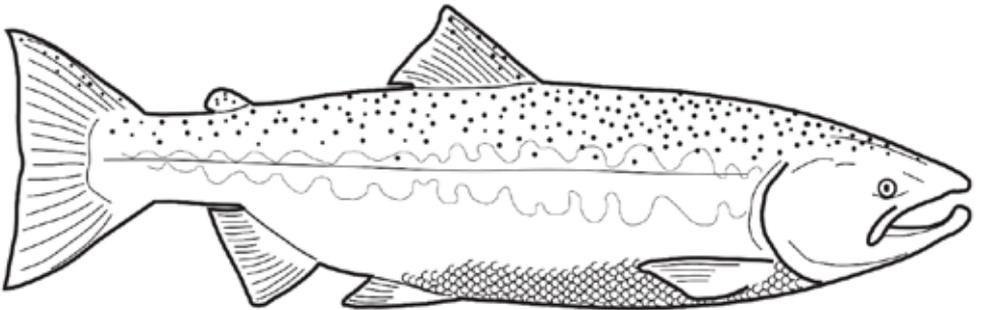
## Naturalist's Corner

While you are on the beach today, take time to explore the wrack line. This is where seaweeds, shells and other ocean things are left on the beach after the tide has receded. The wrack line is habitat for many beach creatures. Take a minute to play a seaweed game -- see how many different kinds you can find in 60 seconds!

Now back to the parking lot where this whole Quest started.  
And find the tall, four-sided kiosk where one fish darted.

Swimming near the base is a special coho salmon --  
You have to look down low to see where this fish is jammin'.  
Use the blank paper on the last page of your Quest book  
and with the crayon create a rubbing for all to look.

Like the trout and salmon you now leave Redwood Creek  
Be sure to wave 'goodbye' to the Tamalpais mountain peak.  
Salmon, willow, Dias Ridge, water and heron all thank you  
For exploring this wonderful place and bid you 'adieu'.



## Naturalist's Corner

Where does your water come from? Much of the water people drink is taken from streams like Redwood Creek. What can you do each day to save water and keep it clean for the other plants and animals that also need it?



Views of Dias Ridge



To Highway 1  
Muir Woods

Start  
and End  
Quest

Muir Beach  
Community

Pacific Way

Parking Restrooms  
Picnic

Restored  
Floodplain

Boardwalk

Coastal  
Trail

Lagoon

Alders  
Willows

Sand  
Dunes

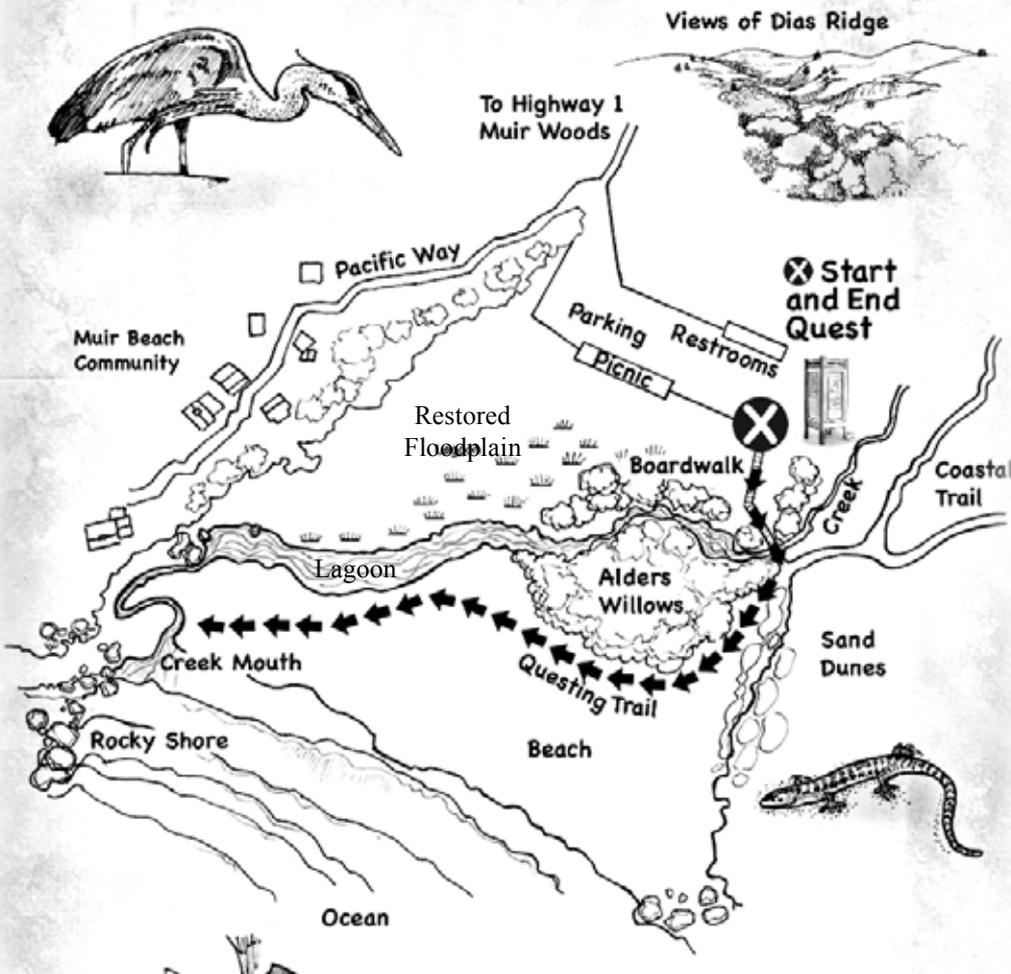
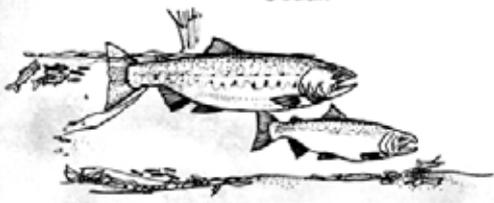
Creek Mouth

Questing Trail

Rocky Shore

Beach

Ocean





National Park Service  
U. S. Department of the Interior

Learn how to create your own questing activity by visiting:  
[www.poeticsofplace.org](http://www.poeticsofplace.org)

Learn more about curriculum-based educational opportunities in the Golden Gate National Recreation Area by visiting:  
[www.nps.gov/goga/forteachers](http://www.nps.gov/goga/forteachers)

Muir Beach Quest Illustrations by Tom Whitworth



We hope you enjoyed the Muir Beach Quest.  
Your feedback improves this activity. Please tell us  
how we can improve by mailing your suggestions to:

**Muir Woods National Monument  
Muir Woods Road  
Mill Valley, CA 94941**

or email your comments to  
**[Timothy\\_Jordan@nps.gov](mailto:Timothy_Jordan@nps.gov)**