

Although the Creek Walk has been held for many years, some of you may be wondering, “What is a Creek Walk?” I was in the same boat when I first heard about the event. To understand the Creek Walk you have to understand a bit about the political history of lower Cache Creek. As I mentioned in my first post (An Introduction: Rewilding of Cache Creek), the Cache Creek Conservancy and Nature Preserve were created through an agreement between the gravel companies and Yolo County. Additionally, Yolo County created an area plan that would monitor the health of the ecosystem on the creek as well as the banks and structures (like bridges) that people use on a daily basis. This plan included the Cache Creek Resource Management Plan, or CCRMP. The county then hired a team of scientists, called the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), to survey the hydrology, sediment deposition, and ecosystem function of the creek to help guide the CCRMP. So, to make a long story short, the annual Creek Walk is not only an opportunity for the public to learn more about Cache Creek, but it is a chance for the TAC to survey the creek.



Start of Day 1 at Capay Dam

Due to the heavy rain during the 2018-2019 winter, the TAC and the County employees were buzzing with excitement for this year’s Creek Walk, anticipating many changes in

the creek compared to last year. The walk is split into three days; the first day extends from Capay Dam to the Syar plant in Madison, the second day leaves Syar and ends at the Cache Creek Nature Preserve, and the third day starts at the Nature Preserve and ends at Huffs corner near Interstate 5. This year, we had five members of the Cache Creek Conservancy staff, as well as multiple Cache Creek volunteers, participate in the Creek Walk. Everyone had the opportunity to speak with the TAC members and others who are involved with the restoration and preservation of Cache Creek. We all learned a lot about the creek's history, morphology, and wildlife, which will help us enhance our education program and restoration efforts.

As we made our way down the creek, it was interesting to see how the river morphology varied even within short distances along the creek. There were times where we were hiking in the dry river bed through sandy gravel, with little plant or animal life to be seen. Then the next mile would require us to cross through water up to our knees, and the increased water supply in these areas created lush vegetation zones with insects and birds flying all around us. The contrast and variation of the different habitats added to the beauty of the creek.



The riparian habitats showcased abundant wildlife. The first day started off with a special treat, when a bald eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) was spotted flying above Capay Dam. We sighted many other raptors as well, including the Swainson's hawk (*Buteo swainsoni*) which is listed as a threatened species in California, so it was very exciting to know that they have establishing themselves along Cache Creek. Some other notable wildlife sightings were black-tailed deer (*Odocoileus hemionus columbianus*), osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*), and a couple of invasive wild boar (*Sus scrofa*) who were equally surprised to see us.



Although each day involved hiking for many miles, often through water or spiky thistles, everyone who participated agreed that it was a very rewarding experience. It was a really wonderful group of people who participated this year, and it was apparent how much everyone cared about the welfare of Cache Creek. The Creek Walk is open to the public, so maybe we will see you out there next year!