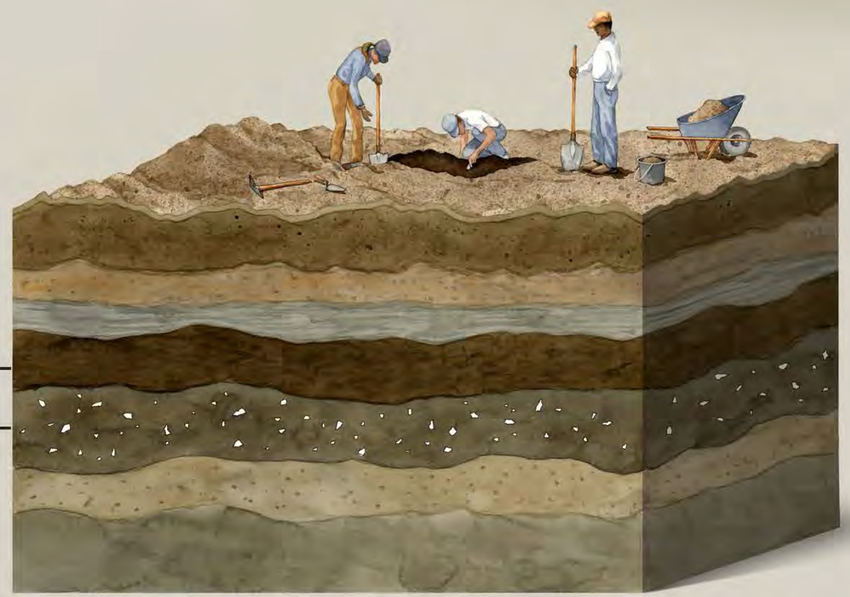
Digging into the distant past

The Bear Creek Rehabilitation Project led to an exciting discovery about life at the end of the Ice Age.



The best evidence of the age of the artifacts was their position in the layers of earth. They were buried below peat—remains of an ancient bog—which was radio-carbon dated to between 8,000 and 10,000 years old. Because older layers will be below younger ones, archaeologists could date the artifacts to about 10,000 to 12,500 years old. Some artifacts had traces of animal DNA which revealed that the people were eating Ice Age bison, deer, bear, sheep, and salmon.

In 2009, archaeologists at Bear Creek found artifacts that revealed something exciting. Over ten thousand years ago, people used this site to make stone tools for hunting, fishing, and gathering. It was the first confirmed evidence in Western Washington of a tool-making site at least 10,000 years old.

At that time, this region was in transition out of the Ice Age. The world was warming, sea levels were rising, and the mammoths, prehistoric bison and other megafauna were declining into extinction. The area around Bear Creek was a large wetland, and the stone artifacts show that the people had a deep knowledge of the landscape, and that Bear Creek was an ideal place to make their tools.

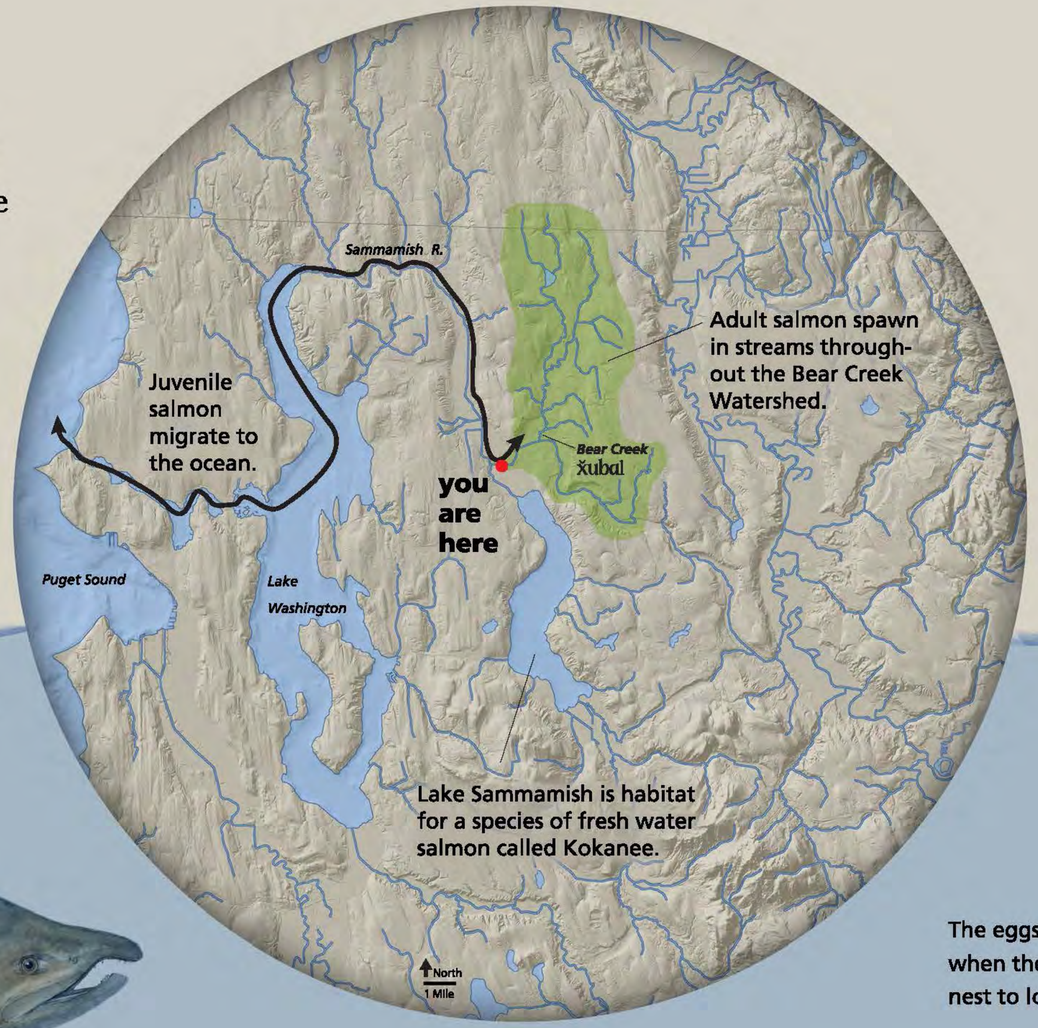
Those people from long ago are the ancestors of Native Americans that still live in this region today.

King Conservation District
City of Redmond WASHINGTON

Bear Creek is a lifeline for salmon

This stretch of Bear Creek is a vital link in the migration routes for salmon.

Urbanization and development have taken a toll on salmon habitat. In this 3000-foot stretch of Bear Creek, we are improving the stream conditions for the three species of salmon found here: Chinook, coho, and sockeye.



With improved stream conditions, juvenile salmon will have places to feed and grow until they are ready to migrate to the ocean. Returning adult salmon will find it easier to reach their upstream spawning grounds where they will complete their life cycle.

Chinook adults look for spawning sites with gravel of the right size and shape for the redd, or nest.

Juvenile salmon hide from predators in aquatic vegetation.

The eggs hatch in the gravel redd and when they are ready, they leave the nest to look for food.

sacəb Chinook salmon in Native language

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People of the land and water

For thousands of years, Native Americans have been sustained by the natural resources of Bear Creek, and the Sammamish Lake and River.

Ancestors of the current tribes Muckleshoot, Snoqualmie, Stillaguamish, and Tulalip have lived here since time immemorial, hunting, fishing, and gathering in the forests, prairies and waterways of this region.

Today, Native American traditions continue. Hunting, fishing, gathering, art, oral history, and native language are all important parts of preserving Native American culture.

Once, the rivers were thick with salmon and the land rich with wildlife and plants. There were many native villages and trading routes throughout the region.

"I will never leave here...

My roots are so deep,
I don't even remember
how deep they go.
They cannot be pulled out.
They are too special,
too much of family,
entwined with too
many generations
of life. You cannot
separate them."

Quote attributed to the grandmother of Warren Kinggeorge of the Muckleshoot Indian Tribe.

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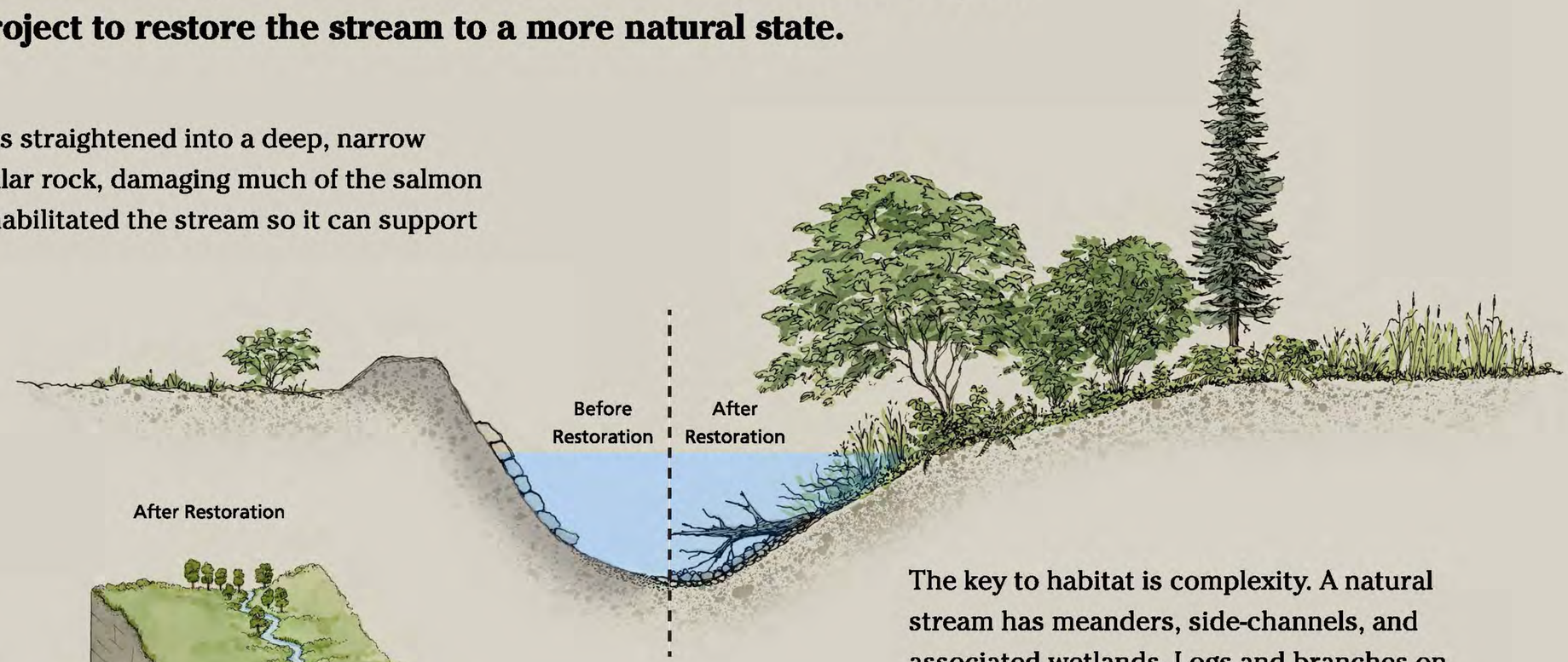
Restoring and revitalizing a stream

In 2009, the City of Redmond began the Lower Bear Creek Rehabilitation Project, a large municipal project to restore the stream to a more natural state.

In the 1960s, Bear Creek was straightened into a deep, narrow channel armored with angular rock, damaging much of the salmon habitat. Today, we have rehabilitated the stream so it can support salmon and other wildlife.



The key to habitat is complexity. A natural stream has meanders, side-channels, and associated wetlands. Logs and branches on the bank and in the water help create pools and riffles. Aquatic vegetation, shrubs, and trees line the stream bank. Complexity gives the stream ecosystem resilience and offers wildlife a greater variety of habitat niches.

King Conservation District

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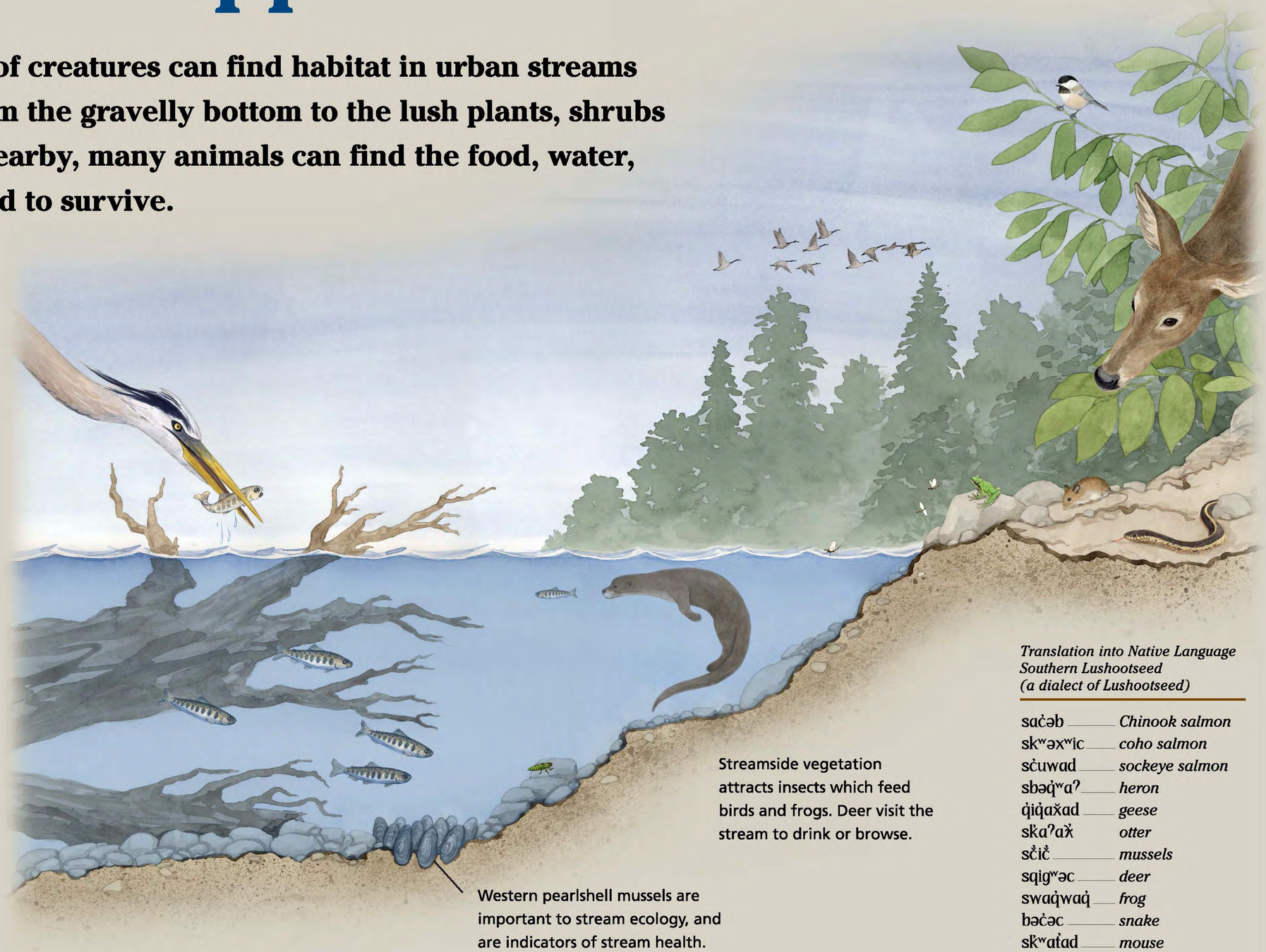
Streams support abundant life

An amazing variety of creatures can find habitat in urban streams like Bear Creek. From the gravelly bottom to the lush plants, shrubs and trees growing nearby, many animals can find the food, water, and shelter they need to survive.

Streams are "edge" habitat, giving wildlife access to both land and water below a sheltering layer of vegetation. Trees and shrubs have nesting or resting places for songbirds, while the nearby wetlands attract ducks and geese. Raptors soar above, knowing that prey animals are likely to appear. Many animals are tiny or secretive, visiting only at night, or staying well-hidden.



Translation into Native Language Southern Lushootseed (a dialect of Lushootseed)

saċəb	*Chinook salmon*
skʷəxʷic	*coho salmon*
sċuwad	*sockeye salmon*
sbəq̓ʷaʔ	*heron*
q̓iq̓ax̌ad	*geese*
sk̓aʔax̌	*otter*
sč̓ič̓	*mussels*
sqigʷəc	*deer*
swaq̓waq̓	*frog*
bəċəc	*snake*
sk̓ʷaṫad	*mouse*

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