

MEET THE JORDAN RIVER

AN ECOLOGICAL WALK ALONG THE RIPARIAN ZONE

A **RIPARIAN ZONE**, like the one you're walking along today, is the interface between land and a river or stream. Plant habitats and communities along the river margins and banks are called riparian vegetation, and are characterized by hydrophilic ("water loving") plants. Riparian zones are significant in ecology, environmental management, and civil engineering because of their role in soil conservation, habitat biodiversity, and the influence they have on fauna and aquatic ecosystems, including grassland, woodland, and wetlands.

OLD MALE BOX ELDER



Acer Negundo

- Known as the "Education Tree"
- Stabilize streambanks, provide cover and cooling, and their brittle branches create hollows for bird nests
- Caterpillars, aphids and Box Elder bugs feed on the tree and are food source many bird species
- Used for bowls, pipe stems, and drums
- Only members of the maple family with compound leaves

HEMP DOGBANE



Apocynum cannabinum

- Native Americans used dogbane for cord, string, and nets

SANDBAR WILLOW



Salix exigua

- Also known as Coyote Willow
- Important plant in the riparian zone because it grows in thickets up to 8 feet tall on the sides of the river.
- Look for graceful arching branches and delicate yellow catkins in spring
- Beavers use branches for food and construction
- Yellow warblers hunt for insects under the protection of the thicket
- Fremont Indians used for home construction, fishing weirs, and basket making
- Easily propagated by plunging cut stems into the mud near the water

WOOD ROSE



Rosa woodsii

- Often found growing in thickets along the Jordan River
- Red stems with straight thorns and compound leaves
- Flowers in June and sets hips in fall
- Rose hips are a valuable food source for birds in winter
- Ideal for restoration sites because it spreads quickly by rhizomes and provides refuges for small animals

COMMON REED



Phragmites australis

- Grows up to 15 feet and crowds out native vegetation

THINK ABOUT THIS...

Why do you think that the Male Box Elder and the Sandbar Willow provide superior wildlife habitat?

NORTH AMERICAN BEAVER



Castor canadensis

- Create dens in the banks of the Jordan River
- This den can be seen on the west side, just before the river curves south
- Dig out river banks when there isn't enough native vegetation to build a lodge of sticks and mud
- Aquatic animals and US's largest rodent at 45-60 lbs.
- Dam streams and rivers to create wetlands by cutting trees with their teeth
- Signs all around the Jordan River

RUSSIAN OLIVE



Elaeagnus angustifolia

- Extremely difficult to control and nearly impossible to eradicate because it can thrive in almost any soil and tolerates drought
- It easily colonizes and displaces native riparian vegetation
- Beavers are doing some heavy labor of invasive tree removal

POCKET GOPHER



Thomomys talpoides

- Create vole tunnels and mounds
- These rodents eat grass, roots, and tubers
- Although we consider their tunnels a nuisance, they do important work by aerating the soil

GOLDEN CURRANT



Ribes aureum

- Native shrub that grows up to four feet in wet areas such as stream and river banks
- Yellow clusters of fragrant blossoms
- Fruits are small, sweet, and a valuable food source for songbirds and other mammals

CATTAILS



Typha latifolia

- One of first wetland plants to colonize exposed mud
- Provide food and cover for wildlife
- Used for mats and baskets and food

SALTGRASS

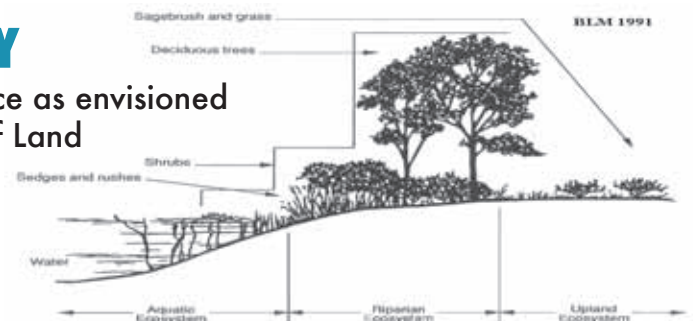


Distichlis spicata

- Forms dense mats with rhizomes and is excellent for soil erosion and keeping weeds at bay
- Native Americans used as a cereal crop

CASE STUDY

Ideal river terrace as envisioned by the Bureau of Land Management



Q Why is the Russian Olive considered invasive if birds nest in its branches and eat its fruit?

A Russian Olive dominated communities provide inferior wildlife habitat to that of native riparian vegetation.