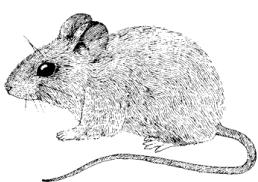




Animal Encounters

Plants aren't the only living things you'll find in the riparian zone! Here are some animals you might encounter in the High Plains riparian zone of eastern CO:

- ◆ Yellow warbler
- ◆ Mallard duck
- ◆ White-tailed deer
- ◆ Coyote
- ◆ Western harvest mouse
- ◆ Northern cricket frog
- ◆ Garter snake



sibr.com/mammals

You Can Help!

- ◆ Learn about the riparian vegetation in your community—are they native species? Contact Colorado Parks & Wildfire if you find noxious weeds.
- ◆ Don't disturb the stream banks by walking or driving on them.
- ◆ Keep animals like cattle or pigs out of the riparian zone, or concentrate their impact by only allowing access to the water at a specific point.
- ◆ Be aware of the impacts of fertilizer runoff. Efficient use of fertilizer, including appropriate quantity and application timing, can help improve water quality.



Want to learn more?

Barr-Milton Watershed Association:
<http://www.barr-milton.org/>

Riparian Vegetation Story Map:
<https://fastucdenver.maps.arcgis.com/apps/Cascade/index.html?appid=15494code67c416oba421eo4d903ba19>

Created by Audrey Dignan (April 2018) for the Barr-Milton Watershed Association, in collaboration with the graduate programs in Environmental Science and Applied Geography & Geospatial Science at the University of Colorado Denver.



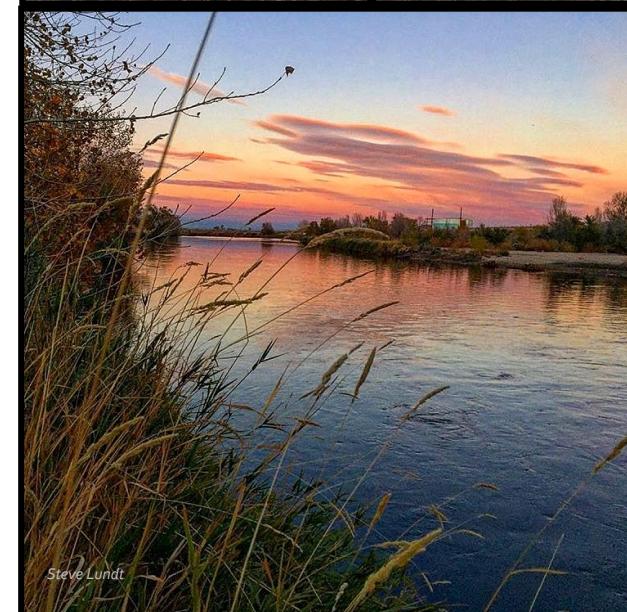
Barr Lake & Milton Reservoir
Watershed Association



COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS AND SCIENCES
Geography and Environmental Sciences
UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO DENVER



Riparian Vegetation



The Riparian Zone

The riparian zone is the area of land along the edges of rivers or streams. It is a transition area, or *ecotone*, between the permanently wet soil and drier soils that are farther away from the water. The riparian ecotone has several important functions:

- ◆ Provides habitat for birds, insects, amphibians, fish, and mammals.
- ◆ Surface runoff is filtered through the vegetation growing in the riparian zone and seeps down into groundwater, which helps improve water quality.
- ◆ Shade from trees & shrubs keeps the water cool, which helps to improve water quality and suitable habitat for temperature-sensitive species.
- ◆ Bank stabilization reduces erosion and decreases the amount of sediment in the water.
- ◆ Vegetation slows down quickly flowing water and can help store flood water in the ground, decreasing the risk of flood damage.

Riparian Vegetation

The plants of the riparian zone need moisture from the ground year-round. To stay healthy during the dry season, their roots grow deep into the soil to get water from underground reservoirs, or *groundwater*.

These deep-rooted species, called *phreatophytes*, include native species of shrubs and trees, such as the plains cottonwood and the sandbar willow. Water-loving species of grasses and their cousins, the rushes and sedges, also grow in the riparian zone. These tree types of plants are known collectively as *graminoids*.

Riparian Plants of Eastern Colorado



plains cottonwood
Populus deltoides



sandbar willow
Salix exigua

These tall trees are easily recognizable along streams and shorelines. Its species name, *deltoids*, means “triangular”, referring to the shape of its leaves.



broadleaf cattail
Typha latifolia

These easy-to-spot wetland plants are common in shallow ponds, ditches, and slow-moving streams.



prairie cordgrass
Spartina pectinata

This grass species thrives in moist areas like irrigation ditches or lake shores.

Invasive Species

Invasive species of riparian plants can be damaging to the ecosystem. They tend to spread quickly downstream using floating water-dispersed seeds. Species often use a lot of water, leaving very little for native species. This disrupts the native plant community and eventually dries up the streambed, contributing to drought conditions.



Russian olive
Elaeagnus angustifolia
CO Noxious Weed List B

These invasive trees have long thorns, silver-green leaves and olive-like fruits. They are able to survive on bare mineral soil and they often outcompete native vegetation.



Saltcedar
Tamarix chinensis
CO Noxious Weed List B

These large shrubs thrive along smaller streams. They produce over 600,000 seeds per year and can prevent the growth of other plants by increasing the salt content of surface soil.

