

Riparian Woodland

Description: Riparian areas are the green, vegetated areas on each side of streams and rivers. In the central valley, riparian areas are usually dominated with trees and shrubs of varying heights, creating a “layered” diversity of habitats.



Interesting Facts

- Riparian plants are highly adapted to flooding. Their stems are flexible to bend with high flows, and broken twigs and branches are often able to grow roots and plant themselves in the mud. Their seeds often float and/or require being buried by the dynamic movement of sand, silt and gravel.
- Riparian areas support a diversity of plant and wildlife species and are second only to rain forests in their biodiversity.

Why is this community important?

- Roots of native riparian plants, trap sediments, improving water quality, while stabilizing banks and reducing erosion.
- Roots, stems, and in-stream wood maintain a habitat for aquatic invertebrates and healthy fish populations.
- Riparian areas provide water, forage, and shade for fish and wildlife, as well as creating opportunities for fishing, camping, bird-watching and other recreational activities.

Conservation Status and Threats: Riparian woodlands are a dwindling treasure here in the Central Valley of California and all over the world where rivers meet humanity. Some studies have estimated that between 89 and 96 percent of riparian areas have been lost due to agriculture, urban development, gravel mining, dams, and levees.