

SESSION G: WILDLIFE II: MANAGING WILDLIFE ASSOCIATIONS WITHIN RIPARIAN SYSTEMS

Mature riparian systems in California are routinely characterized as having the greatest biological diversity and the highest productivity among wildlife habitats. Riparian systems are known to provide shade, food, cover, water, and dispersal and migratory corridors for many invertebrate, fish, amphibian, reptile, bird, and mammal species. A significant number of wildlife species are found only in riparian habitats. Twenty-five percent of California mammals, 80 percent of amphibians, and 40 percent of reptiles are limited to or dependent upon riparian zones, and more than 135 species of California birds depend on or prefer riparian habitats. Desert habitats show an even higher percentage of species dependent on riparian habitats.

Riparian habitats are increasingly recognized as being of tremendous value to wildlife, with greater emphasis now being placed on recovering or restoring riparian habitats. As damaged riparian areas are restored, existing habitats enhanced, and new habitats created, wildlife values should increase. The following papers will explore the means and rationale for monitoring changes in wildlife species composition and numbers over time. Wildlife investigators are seeking to relate species changes with successional changes in vegetation, with vegetation types, and with management strategies. The monitoring of these changes is important in any measure of success in achieving riparian ecosystem mitigation and in evaluating management strategies.

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