

# Riparian Vegetation and Wildlife



Riparian areas have the most biological diversity of any communities in Vermont. Common tree and shrub species found in the Intervale's riparian zone include: silver maple, eastern cottonwood, black willow, green ash, American elm, box elder, and red osier dogwood.



*Silver maple is one of the dominant trees in the Intervale's riparian forest.*



*The beaver is common in the Intervale, often gnawing on towering cottonwoods on the riverbank.*

Mammals found in this riparian corridor include: beaver, woodchuck, red fox, raccoon, whitetail deer, red squirrel, American cottontail rabbit, and muskrat.



*The great blue heron is a skilled fisher, often wading along the river's edge.*

Common birds along the Winooski River are: great blue heron, cedar waxwing, pileated woodpecker, northern cardinal, blue jay, mallard duck, herring gull, spotted sandpiper, northern oriole, American robin, black-capped chickadee, and red-tailed hawk.

Evidence of plant and animal interactions are abundant at this spot in the forest. Beavers often chew the trunks of large cottonwoods along the river. This kills the trees, which eventually rot and fall. The newly created gap in the tree canopy allows more sunlight to hit the forest floor, and new trees grow. These processes are essential for the cycling of nutrients and energy, which maintain biodiversity in the forest community.



*The red fox is a somewhat elusive member of the Intervale community.*

Illustration credits: 1) maple leaves - Bernath, Stefan. 1979. *Trees of the Northeast Coloring Book*. New York: Dover Publications; 2) beaver and fox - Gaspas, Diane. 2001. *Forest Animals Coloring Book*. Mineola, NY: Dover Publications; 3) great blue heron - Kennedy, Paul E. 1974. *Audubon's Birds of America Coloring Book*. New York: Dover Publications.



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