

Riparian Ecosystems

DYNAMIC SYSTEMS ON THE EDGE

What are Riparian Ecosystems?

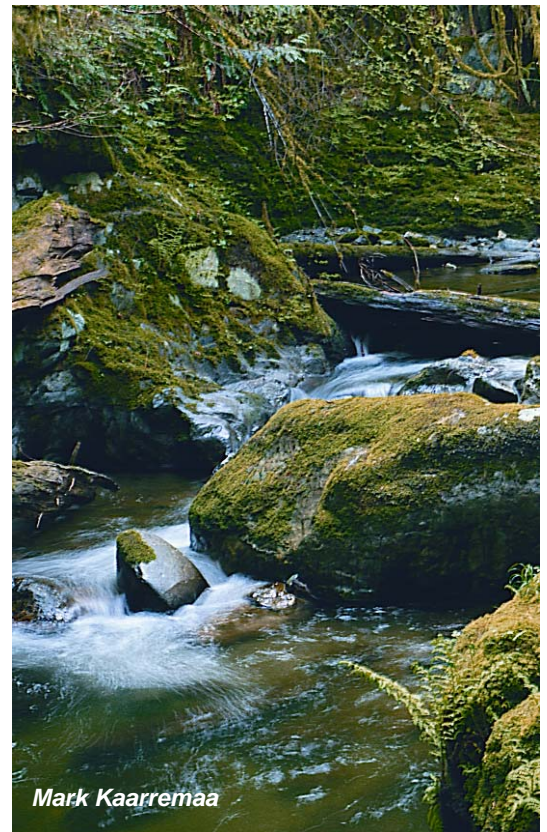
Riparian ecosystems occur along the edges of water bodies. The moist soils found in riparian ecosystems support plant communities distinct from those of surrounding upland areas. Riparian ecosystems vary in size, terrain and vegetation, ranging from gravel bars to old growth forest ravines. Due to seasonal changes in water levels, riparian ecosystems are highly dynamic.

Where are Riparian Ecosystems located?

Riparian ecosystems occur along the margins of streams, rivers, ponds, marshes and lakes. Though large water bodies have extensive riparian ecosystems, the relatively dry climate of the Gulf Islands has resulted in smaller stream systems with narrower riparian ecosystems.



Riparian Ecosystems make up only 0.03% of Mayne Island.

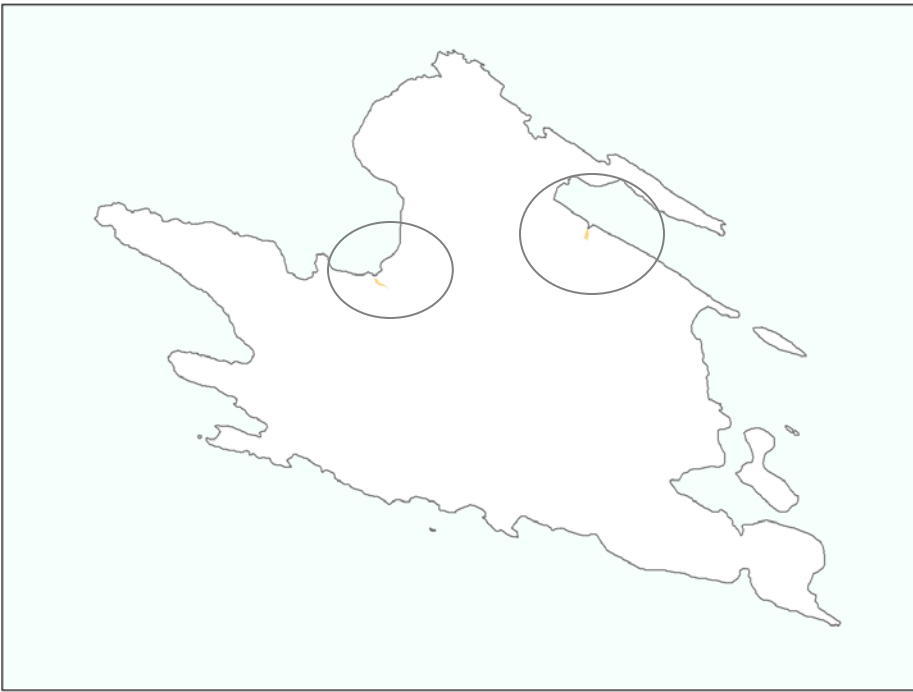


Why are Riparian Ecosystems important?

Despite their small size, riparian ecosystems support an exceptionally high number of species because they include three critical habitat components needed by wildlife – water, shelter and food. Riparian ecosystems form valuable corridors for wildlife and humans alike, with many trail systems following these areas of remnant vegetation. Riparian ecosystems serve as natural water filtration systems and help regulate the flow of water – a function vital to the islands' sometimes dry climate.



Riparian Ecosystems on Mayne Island



How can we protect Riparian Ecosystems?

Protecting riparian ecosystems from increased run-off, sediment loading and contaminants prevents erosion, flashfloods and maintains habitat and the quality of adjoining freshwater ecosystems.

- Create and maintain a vegetated buffer to protect against outside disturbance
- Limit human and domestic animal access to reduce damage to riparian soils and vegetation
- Retain features such as snags, logs and downed trees
- Allow natural disturbances to occur, such as flooding and channel changes, and restrict human interferences such as hard bank reinforcements and infilling
- Restrict nearby pesticide, fertilizer or other chemical use



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Associated Species

Animals

Beaver, muskrat, river otter, mink, belted kingfisher, yellow warbler, great blue heron, rough-skinned newt, insects and larvae

Plants

Lady fern, salmonberry, red alder, willow, western redcedar, foamflower, mosses

Rare Species

Red-tailed frog, dun skipper (butterfly), blue dasher (dragonfly)

For more information

Please visit the Islands Trust website:

www.islandstrust.bc.ca

or call 1-250-405-5151 or 1-800-663-7867 (Enquiry BC)