

Riparian Areas as Wildlife Corridors

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Habitat fragmentation as a result of human activities is an ongoing problem that negatively impacts Alberta's wildlife. Large portions of the province have been altered by industrial or agricultural development. This loss of landscape connectivity reduces that ability of wildlife to move through the environment, impacting breeding, migration, and access to food, water, and shelter. Wildlife corridors are stretches of intact habitat that help to connect isolated habitat that has been cut-off by human activities. These corridors allow for the safe movement of wildlife between larger natural areas while also providing additional habitat.

Riparian areas (the transitional zone between terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems) on either side of waterbodies like rivers act as linear wildlife highways that can help facilitate the movement of wildlife through human dominated landscapes such as agricultural lands and urban areas. These riparian corridors provide the essential components of wildlife habitat: food, water, cover, and space. The greater the breadth and intactness of the river's riparian area the more beneficial and useful it is to wildlife.

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The Riparian Corridor of the Blindman River



Agricultural producers that border riverways can help improve riparian intactness by limiting or stopping agricultural activities close to rivers. As well, producers and landowners can leave riparian areas undeveloped or restore them back to their original condition. The Blindman River in central Alberta is a great example of a riparian wildlife corridor. Crossing three counties along the heavily developed Edmonton-to-Calgary corridor, the Blindman River serves as an important wildlife corridor through the center of Alberta's agricultural heartland. Healthy, intact riparian areas along the course of the river provide diverse wildlife habitat with a rich matrix of native woody and herbaceous vegetation. The Blindman River Restoration Project was instituted to help improve riparian intactness along the Blindman River, ultimately improving the connectivity of wildlife habitat in the region. The project developed extensive riparian buffers along the waterway and educated producers and landowners on the vital importance riparian corridors serve as connectors of habitat and as critical migration and dispersal routes for wildlife.

Useful Resources

Learn more about the Blindman River sub-watershed and the restoration activities going on with the Friends of the Blindman River Stewardship Committee!



[Friends of the Blindman Stewardship Committee](#)



[The Blindman River Restoration Project](#)



References & Resources

<https://www.awes-ab.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Riparian-Manual.pdf>

<https://www.awes-ab.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Riparian-Management-Course-Workbook.pdf>

<https://www.awes-ab.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Grazing-Livestock-in-Riparian-Areas.pdf>

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