

Riparian Woodlands - Rachael Hamilton MSP

Hello, I am Rachael Hamilton, and I am the Member of the Scottish Parliament for Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire, and I am also the Nature Champion for Riparian Woodlands.

Riparian woodlands are simply woodlands that grow along rivers and water courses.

These woodlands serve very important functions in our landscapes, like regulating natural processes and mitigating flooding. Roots from trees such as the water-loving alder can help to prevent banks from eroding, and they help to control the temperature of waters by providing shade.

Cool water temperatures are critical for species like Atlantic salmon and the dappled shade from riparian woods over the water prevents temperatures from rising too much and negatively affecting wildlife.

Native trees along rivers also have a beneficial impact on the biological health of the river. Those branches and trees that fall into the water provide shelter for animals and help change the water flow, creating a variety of habitats on the riverbed. When tree leaves fall into the water, especially from small trees like willow, they provide a food source for aquatic life and add nutrients to upland streams, where nutrients are often in short supply.

Some of our most iconic species rely on healthy riparian and aquatic habitats, including otters, ospreys and Atlantic salmon.