



General Characteristics: Bottomland hardwood forests are a type of wetland community found along the floodplains of rivers and streams. The timing, duration, and frequency of flooding play important roles in determining the type of vegetation present in these forests. Bottomland hardwood swamp communities have soils saturated with water much of the time and may have water present 10-12 months of the year. These areas are dominated by flood-tolerant tree species such as bald cypress and water tupelo. Areas with drier soils support additional hardwood trees such as cherrybark oak, sweet pecan, and winged elm, which are adapted to less frequent flooding.

Current Status in Arkansas: Only 20-25% of the bottomland hardwood forests that occurred across Arkansas prior to European settlement remain today. Most of these forests were cleared for agriculture. As the bottomland hardwood forests disappeared, so did the ivory-billed woodpecker, Carolina parakeet, and Bachman's warbler. Even now, wetlands provide critical habitat for one third of the endangered plants and animals in the U.S. Bottomland hardwood forests are also important for flood protection and groundwater recharge. Federal and state agencies are working together with private landowners to restore these forested bottomlands in Arkansas.



Species Key

- | | | |
|---|--|---|
| 1. White Crappie
<i>Pomoxis annularis</i> | 9. Overcup Oak
<i>Quercus lyrata</i> | 17. Great Blue Heron
<i>Ardea herodias</i> |
| 2. American Lotus
<i>Nelumbo lutea</i> | 10. Bald Cypress
<i>Taxodium distichum</i> | 18. Arrow Arum
<i>Peltandra virginica</i> |
| 3. Mink
<i>Mustela vison</i> | 11. Pileated Woodpecker
<i>Dryocopus pileatus</i> | 19. Common Cattail
<i>Typha latifolia</i> |
| 4. Woolly Bulrush
<i>Scirpus cyperinus</i> | 12. Barred Owl
<i>Strix varia</i> | 20. Cottonmouth
<i>Agkistrodon piscivorus</i> |
| 5. Royal Fern
<i>Osmunda regalis</i> | 13. Prothonotary Warbler
<i>Protonotaria citrea</i> | 21. Blunt Spikerush
<i>Eleocharis obtusa</i> |
| 6. Water Hickory
<i>Carya aquatica</i> | 14. Nuttall Oak
<i>Quercus nuttallii</i> | 22. Muskrat
<i>Ondatra zibethicus</i> |
| 7. Wood Duck
<i>Aix sponsa</i> | 15. Giant Cane
<i>Arundinaria gigantea</i> | 23. Channel Catfish
<i>Ictalurus punctatus</i> |
| 8. Water Tupelo
<i>Nyssa aquatica</i> | 16. Black Bear
<i>Ursus americanus</i> | 24. Bluegill
<i>Lepomis macrochirus</i> |

Flora and Fauna: River floodwaters deposit rich alluvial soils in the "bottom lands" that support many types of plants, including 70 different trees. These plants, in turn, support a diverse array of wildlife. Most of the plants and animals in bottomland hardwood forests have some adaptations related to water. Bald cypress and water tupelo have swollen bases that provide increased support in soft, water-logged soil. Water-tolerant plants, such as arrow arum and American lotus, provide food for small mammals and birds, which are hunted by predators like the mink and the cottonmouth. The great blue heron and the black bear come to the margins of the forest to feed on fish adapted to live in the slow moving waters. During the summer months, over 30 different bird species can be found nesting in bottomland hardwood forests. Some, like the prothonotary warbler, are migrants from Central and South America that fly north every spring to breed. Still others are found here year round, like the wood duck and barred owl, roosting and nesting in the cavities of hollow trees.

<http://www.naturalheritage.com>

Arkansas Natural Heritage Commission
1500 Tower Building • 323 Center Street • Little Rock, AR 72201
501.324.9619 • email: arkansas@naturalheritage.org

