

# River Habitat

**In-stream habitat** refers to the shape of a river and the river bed (the bottom of the river). Rocks, boulders, and sand can change the shape of the bed. Sediments can collect on one side of the river making it bend and either making it flow faster or slower. Look at the river. Can you see a **riffle**, where the river is flowing over rocks? Can you see a **run**, where the river is flowing straight, without interference? Sometimes a fallen tree can create a **pool**, where the water stays and slowly is released and replenished by the flow of the river.

All animals like to live in different places. Even within a river habitat, there are many places where you will find different animals. Where do you think you would find a salmon? How about an egret? Do you remember where we found caddisfly larvae?

A river habitat refers to the plants, rocks, dirt, which provides an environment for the organisms that live in the stream. Some rivers may have steep banks with a **riparian zone** that is only a few feet wide. The **riparian zone** refers to the areas that border the body of water, and the plants that grow there are called riparian vegetation. What are some plants that you see growing in Guadalupe River's riparian zone?

Healthy riparian zones are important to a healthy in-stream habitat since both provide habitat for different fish and land animals. Trees provide shelter and food for birds and insects, as well as, shade for the river. Shrubs help scatter rain drops to prevent erosion, and also filter out the sediments from the run-off water before it reaches the river.

