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Ecosystem Functioning in Rivers and Riparian Zones

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Message from the Guest Editor

Rivers and their riparian zones are intimately linked and characterized by an interchange of resources across the land/water ecotone. Riparian habitats moderate nutrient inputs, base flows, air/water temperatures, and erosion, as well as inputs of terrestrial litter into stream food webs. Rivers flood riparian zones, delivering sediment and nutrients, making them distinctively different in terms of soils and vegetation to the surrounding terrestrial landscape. Furthermore, aquatic stream insects emerge from the river and move into riparian habitats, where they support a multitude of riparian organisms, such as birds and ground-dwelling invertebrates. Rivers and their riparian habitats provide a range of ecosystem services by, e.g., buffering impacts of hydrological extremes and offering the setting for recreational activities. Due to the multifunctionality of riparian zones, conserving and restoring them could have significant implication in improving biodiversity, water quality, and benefits to humans. This Issue focuses on functioning of rivers and riparian zones, from understanding the underlying mechanisms and processes to management options, including restoration strategies.



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