



Life of a Flood Plain



The power of water is no more apparent than in the rivers which cut their way through stone and soil to form a variety of majestic landforms such as valleys and canyons. After tens of thousands of years, the river develops a base level and forms a broad valley. As the river channel meanders from side to side following the path of least resistance, it deposits sediments from further upstream. These sediments are known as alluvium.

Broad shallow rivers like the Flint River are subject to frequent flooding which brings alluvium and spreads it across the wide valley. The area where alluvium is deposited is known as a flood plain. Flood plains are very productive areas because of these deposits. The Flint River supports extensive bottomland hardwood forests that grow on these rich sediments. Other similar rivers have been settled and developed for agriculture because of their rich soils.

The natural processes that form this unique ecological community are still intact along the Flint River. Landforms resulting from these processes has made the Flint River an excellent venue for canoeing, hiking, fishing, and other recreational activities.



Back Swamps and Oxbows

In years when the river floods, water spreads throughout this broad valley. In areas with less porous soils, small marshes form and retain water long after the floodwaters recede. These areas are known as Back Swamps, and their role as sinks for floodwaters helps reduce flooding further down-

stream. These areas are also fantastic wildlife habitat. Deeper water bodies separated from the main river channel are known as Oxbows. Oxbows form when changes in river flow cut off small bends of the river, eventually leaving them completely separated. Oxbows are especially beneficial for waterfowl during the winter months and migration.

Flint River Oxbow and Bottomland Forest/ADCNR Photos



Belted Kingfisher/Alan Murphy

Noisy Resident on Quiet Waters

The presence of the Belted Kingfisher is usually given away by its loud rattling call. However, this accomplished fisherman can also be quiet and unobtrusive. These birds perch high above the water carefully searching for unfortunate fish or hover over the water before diving after their prey. Kingfishers nest in earthen banks along the river. These banks are formed by years of deposited alluvium.



Prothonotary Warbler/Walt Burch

Bright Flash in the Forest

In spring, one of the most common sounds in the bottomland forest on the Flint River is the Prothonotary Warbler. The distinctive *tsweet, tsweet, tsweet* reveals the presence of this beautiful warbler. Its bright yellow and white plumage is difficult to miss even in the dark shadows of the forest.