PLANT COMMUNITIES

HAZEL BAZEMORE COUNTY PARK

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Note: some of the information in this report came from “Birds of the Texas Coastal Bend (BOTCB), Texas A&M Press”, Rappole and Blacklock, 1985.

PLANT COMMUNITIES:

Transitional Riparian Forest (Plate 2), Bottomland communities along Nueces River, transitional between tall deciduous forests of the Austro Riparian and the Tropical Evergreen Forest along rivers in southern Tamaulipas, Mexico.

Woodland communities within the Texas Central Coast are especially important for sustaining migrating birds and viewing large numbers of land-bird migrants. From early March to mid June and late July through November, large number s of Circum and Trans Gulf birds depend the oasis riparian forests of the Teas Coastal Bend for their survival. The woodlands here also provide a home for countless numbers of Austral/Subtropical species of birds and other animals.

BAZEMORE PLANT COMMUNITIES:

1) Transitional Riparian Forest (27%): located immediately adjacent to the river, mainly from the far south river dike, there are two; both dikes run horizontal to the river. The trees that once occurred there were, Black Willow (Salix nigra), Mexican Ash (Fraxinus berlandieriana), Cedar Elm (Ulmus crassifolia), Sugarberry Hackberry (Celtis laevigata) and a couple of Red Mulberries (Morus rubra). The mid-story was fairly open and the understory was mostly Dwarf Palmettos (Sabal minor). Vines: Mustang Grape (Vitis mustangnsis), Possum Grape (), Poison Ivy (), and immediately adjacent to the river, and near the end of the park, there were several Snailseed Vines (*Cocculus carolinus*). Within natural clearing and near edges Bloodroot (*Ambrosia trifida*), and Dewberry grew. The largest of trees there were Sugarberry Hackberry. All the trees along the river supported quantities of Spanish moss (Tillandsia usneoides).

Today the Transitional Riparian Woodlands at Bazemore are replaced with mowed grasses, a few pick neck tables and there are almost no trees. For a snap shot of what this area once looked like but with much larger trees, visit the board walk and deck located adjacent to the river near the northwest end of the park. To see what the prairie habitats looked like see that remains immediately south of the same board walk or look across the river, minus the invading Huisache, for this part of world in the absence of fire prairies transition into shrub lands.

2) Subtropical Woodlands (30%): this habit begins at the base of the hills, and on top of the hill it becomes Dry Thorn Scrub (Dry Chaparral; Plate 5). Some of the plants here are the same species that occur in the Transitional Riparian but with more diversity: includes Anacua (), Ebony (), and Net-veined Hackberry (C. reticulate), the mid-story plants are described in BOTCB, Mesquite Chaparral (Plate 4). The understory here was fairly originally open but now is infested with Guinea Grass.

Birds that occur in the Subtropical habitats are those expected for a transition, Transitional Riparian and Mesquite Savanna (Plate 3). Bird icons for the Subtropical habitats are Pauraque, Long-billed Thrasher and Olive Sparrow.

3) Dry Thorn Scrub, also referred to as Dry Chaparral in BOTCB (25%), plant description at Bazemore is much like as described for Dry Chaparral (Plate 5), BOTCB (page 12). This habitat is the most xeric of all the habitats in the Texas Coastal Bend.

Historically birds that were characteristic Dry Thorn Scrub at Bazemore would be Common Ground Dove, Roadrunner, Ani, Bewick’s Wren, Verdin, once Curve-billed Thrasher, White-eyed Vireo, Olive and Cassin’s Sparrow.

4) Cord Grass Prairie (15%), this habitat once existed at Bazemore, it was a transitional area located between the Transitional Riparian and the Subtropical habitats associated with the hills, and it existed and still occurs immediately south of the south most natural river dike. Today this area does not have much Coastal Cord Grass (), and is dominated mainly by some Retama (), Sea Ox-eye (), Sumpweed (Iva *annua*), Hey-meadow Spartina (), Saltgrass (), and Shoregrass (). Portions of the Hey-meadow Gras (Spartina), site hold water during wet periods, and some of areas of Marsh-meadow Spartina is found immediately adjacent to Bazemore Pond.

The wet prairie habitats are especially important for several passerines during winter. Birds that utilize the site both during migration and in winter are: rails, wadingbirds Wilson’s snipe, Logger-headed Shrike, mash wrens, common yellowthroat, and Swamp Sparrows. Vermillion Flycatcher utilizes the dead trees.

5) Bazemore Pond (03%), this is a fresh water pond located at the base of the hill at the southwestern part of the park. At the base of the hill the pond we find Dwarf Palmettos, a few young Sable Palms, a couple of Black Willows, Hackberries, Anacua, and Mexican Ash. The vegetation near is what Subtropical and along the ponds edges some marsh pond species like sedges. The understory was once open with considerable leaf litter. No it is dominated with Guinea Grass.