

Brooks, Streams & Rivers



A stream is a body of water with a current, confined within a bed and stream banks. Depending on its locale or certain characteristics, a stream may be referred to as a branch, brook, beck, burn, creek, crick, kill, lick, rill, river syke, bayou, rivulet, streamage, wash, run or runnel.

In some countries or communities a stream may be defined by its size. In the United States a stream is classified as a watercourse less than 60 feet (18 metres) wide. Streams are important as conduits in the water cycle, instruments in groundwater recharge, and they serve as corridors for fish and wildlife migration.

The biological habitat in the immediate vicinity of a stream is called a riparian zone. Given the status of the ongoing Holocene extinction, streams play an important corridor role in connecting fragmented habitats and thus in conserving biodiversity. The study of streams and waterways in general is known as surface hydrology and is a core element of environmental geography.