

West Verde Creek

West Verde Creek rises in the northwest section of the Hill Country State Natural Area (SNA) in Bandera County (Fig. 2). The creek flows southeast into Middle Verde Creek in Medina County. The ecologically significant stream segment on West Verde Creek is within the Edwards Plateau ecoregion of Texas. The ecological significance of this segment is based upon the following criteria:

1. Biological function – The aquatic and riparian habitats (Fig.5) associated with the stream support an exceptionally diverse assemblage of invertebrates, fish, reptiles, and birds characteristic of the Edwards Plateau ecoregion. Willows, sycamore, bald cypress, and pecan dominate the riparian gallery forests. The surrounding slopes are dominated by plateau live oak and Ashe juniper.
2. Hydrologic function – This segment is within the Edwards Aquifer drainage area. It flows into Verde Creek, Hondo Creek, and the Frio River which is impounded by Choke Canyon Reservoir. The Frio River flows into the Nueces River, which provides freshwater inflow to Nueces Bay and Corpus Christi Bay. Verde Creek crosses the Edwards Aquifer recharge Zone in northern Medina County. The riparian habitats of the creek function to improve the quality of runoff and groundwater discharge into the creek, attenuate peak flood flows, and to some extent, stabilize base flows.
3. Riparian conservation area – The Hill Country State Natural Area (SNA) has been nominated for inclusion in the Heart of Texas Wildlife Trail²¹.
4. High water quality/exceptional aquatic life/high aesthetic value – West Verde Creek has several spring-fed tributaries that provide high quality water that supports an exceptionally diverse assemblage of fish, amphibians, and aquatic plants. This area is a very scenic region of the Edwards Plateau ecoregion.
5. Threatened or endangered species/unique communities – The following rare species associated with aquatic or riparian habitats occur in or along this segment: the Golden-cheeked warbler (Fed.E, St.E), Black-capped vireo (Fed.E, St.E), and Zone-tailed hawk (St.T) use riparian forests for nesting, although they are not restricted to these habitats. The state fish, the Guadalupe bass, is endemic to the headwaters of perennial streams of the Edwards Plateau ecoregion. The Tobusch fishhook cactus (Fed.E, St.E) is occasionally found in gravels along creek bottoms.



Figure 5. West Verde Creek in the Hill Country State Natural Area (11/20/00).