

Upper Floodplain Hardwood Forest

State Rank S3

Community Description

An almost complete canopy is dominated by sugar maple, red oak, or yellow birch, with red maple and ash often common and basswood or black cherry occasional. The understory is open and shrubs are sparse. The lush carpet of herbs changes from spring ephemerals such as trout lily and bloodroot to variable cover of mixed graminoids and forbs in summer. Bryoid cover is minor.

Soil and Site Characteristics

Sites occur on slightly elevated terraces flanking low-gradient rivers at elevations typically <1,000'. Flooding is occasional, sometimes less frequent than annually. These forests have lower frequency and duration of flooding than silver maple floodplain forests. Most known examples are along medium to larger rivers. Soils are fine sand or silt, usually with good drainage capacity and relatively high nutrient levels; pH is 5.0-6.2.

Diagnostics

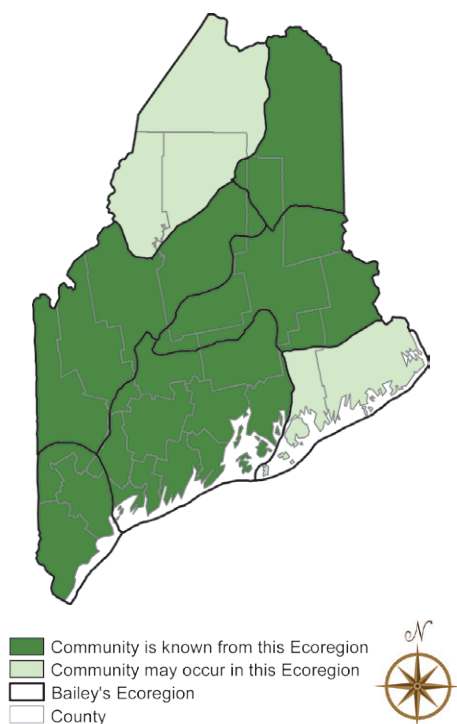
Sites occupy floodplain or river terrace settings with mineral soil. The canopy is dominated by sugar maple, red oak or yellow birch. Silver maple and red maple may be present. A dense herb layer includes species not typical of wetlands

(e.g. starflower, zig-zag goldenrod, big-leaved aster, silvery spleenwort). Sensitive fern is often present but not dominant. Spring ephemerals are often abundant.

Similar Types

On large rivers, Silver Maple Floodplain Forests are often adjacent to these forests, occurring between them and the channel, and are dominated by silver maple. Red Maple - Sensitive Fern Swamps have red maple dominant, and have soils that are flooded or saturated throughout the growing season. Beech - Birch - Maple Forests, Maple - Basswood - Ash Forests, and Red Oak - Northern Hardwoods - White Pine Forests can be similar in canopy composition, but are not in the floodplain or terraces of a river. Hardwood Seepage Forests occur along small stream

Location Map



Upper Floodplain Hardwood Forest

drainages, usually sloping with steeper gradients.

Conservation, Wildlife, and Management Considerations

Virtually all of these forests have been harvested, and many have been converted to agriculture. Non-native plant species such as Japanese knotweed and Asiatic bittersweet, which may displace plants native to our area, represent a threat to the integrity of these forests and have degraded some Maine examples.

The northern waterthrush, barred owl, belted kingfisher, bank swallow, scarlet tanager, and green heron are associates of this community type. Wood turtles overwinter in river channels and forage in floodplain forests where they may feed on amphibian egg masses in vernal pools. The silver-haired bat often roosts in riparian habitats in trees with loose bark. Fairy shrimp may also occur in isolated vernal pools.

Distribution

Throughout Maine, New England, and New Brunswick.

Landscape Pattern: Large Patch

Characteristic Plants

These plants are frequently found in this community type. Those with an asterisk are often diagnostic of this community.

Canopy

Basswood*
Black cherry*
Green ash*
Red oak*
Sugar maple*
Yellow birch*

Sapling/shrub

American elm
Choke cherry
Musclewood*
Nannyberry*
White ash

Herb

Bloodroot
Blue cohosh
Jack-in-the-pulpit
Lady fern*
Ostrich fern*
Sensitive fern
Silvery spleenwort*
Tall meadow-rue

Associated Rare Plants

Bottlebrush grass
Pubescent sedge
Wild garlic
Wild ginger
Wild leek

Associated Rare Animals

Wood turtle

Examples on Conservation Lands You Can Visit

- Trout Brook, Baxter State Park – Piscataquis Co.
- Wassataquoik Public Lands – Penobscot Co.
- West Branch Piscataquis River, Appalachian Trail – Piscataquis Co.