

Cattail Marsh

State Rank S5

Community Description

Tall marsh vegetation is dominated by cattails and mostly deciduous shrubs. The cattails may be patchy, locally dominant, and grow taller than the other plant species. Common cattail, narrow-leaved cattail, or both may be present; the latter is common near the coast or in brackish settings and the former is more widespread. Shrubs include winterberry, meadowsweet, and others. The dense growth of shrubs and cattails leaves little room for other herbaceous species; additional occasional species include swamp milkweed, wild calla, and a few sedges and grasses. Bryophytes are usually sparse and occur on vegetation hummocks.

Soil and Site Characteristics

Cattail marshes often occur in impounded, semi-permanently flooded, and/or nutrient-rich waters. Documented sites are at low elevations (<500') and are generally associated with large basins and adjacent to open water. The substrate is muck or mineral soil rather than peat.



Variable Damselfly

Diagnostics

Standing water persists through all or most of season. Sites are non-tidal, and cattails

are prominent above a mixture of low shrubs and sedges.

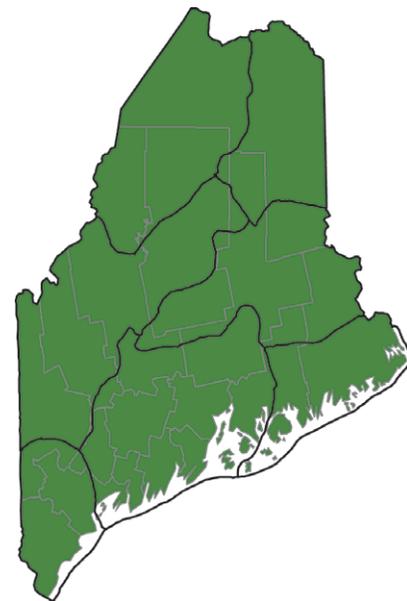
Similar Types

Mixed Graminoid-Shrub Marshes share many species, but lack cattails (rarely present at <5% cover) and typically occur in settings that are only temporarily flooded rather than with semi-permanent standing water. Brackish Tidal Marshes and Freshwater Tidal Marshes may have patches of narrow-leaved cattail but usually contain plants indicative of tidal habitats.

Conservation, Wildlife, and Management Considerations

This community is well distributed

Location Map



■ Community is known from this Ecoregion
■ Community may occur in this Ecoregion
 Bailey's Ecoregion
 County



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statewide and apparently well represented (although not well documented) on public lands and private conservation lands. Maintaining appropriate wetland buffers can help ensure that adjacent land uses do not result in degradation.

These deep emergent marshes provide foraging and nesting habitat for a large number of wading birds and waterfowl, including rare species such as the least bittern, common moorhen, and American coot. Black terns may nest colonially in large inland occurrences of this community type with about 50% vegetative and 50% open water. Other birds commonly associated with cattail marshes include Virginia rails, red-winged blackbirds, and marsh wrens.

Distribution

Statewide, more common near the coast and at lower inland elevations. Extends southward and westward from Maine, and presumably into Canada.

Landscape Pattern: Small Patch

Characteristic Plants

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

Sapling/shrub

Leatherleaf
Meadowsweet*
Sweetgale
Winterberry

Herb

Common cattail*
Narrow-leaved cattail
Pickerelweed
Small St. Johnswort

Associated Rare Plants

Tall beak-rush

Associated Rare Animals

American coot
Black tern
Common moorhen
Least bittern

Examples on Conservation Lands You Can Visit

- Alonzo Garcelon Wildlife Management Area – Kennebec Co.
- Hurds Pond Wildlife Management Area – Waldo Co.
- Jamie's Pond Wildlife Management Area – Kennebec Co.
- Sebago Lake State Park – Cumberland Co.