

Red Maple Swamp

State Rank S5

Community Description

Red maple dominates the somewhat open to nearly closed canopy (20-90% closure), sometimes with a relatively large component (up to 40% cover) of balsam fir, red spruce, or northern white cedar. Green ash and yellow birch are common, but rarely abundant, associates. The maples may be widely spaced with multiple trunks and arching crowns. The shrub layer is patchy; winterberry is common and various other shrubs may be locally abundant. The herb layer is well developed and dominated by herbs, with dwarf shrubs <20% of herb cover. Bluejoint and sensitive fern are characteristic herbs. The bryoid layer is usually <35% cover; peat mosses are typical but do not form extensive, deep carpets as they do in peatlands.

Soil and Site Characteristics

Sites occupy mineral soils or well decomposed organic material over mineral soil on flats or gentle slopes in small basins, often on floodplains of streams to small rivers. Soils are typically 30-60 cm deep, loamy to silty in texture, sometimes with well decomposed muck over the mineral fraction, and pH 4.8-5.4.

Diagnostics

These are mineral soil wetlands in which



Red Maple Flowers

red maple dominates the canopy or is co-dominant with conifers other than black spruce or larch. The seasonally flooded soils usually remain saturated through the growing season.

Similar Types

Red Maple Wooded Fens are similar, but either occur in association with large peatlands or occupy small somewhat peaty basins; they do not occur on mineral soils. Some small Northern White Cedar Swamps and Spruce - Fir - Cinnamon Fern Forests, particularly along the coast, include a fair amount of red maple but have cedar or spruce/fir, respectively, as the most abundant canopy species. Silver Maple Floodplain Forests are dominated by silver maple and generally occur along larger



Red Maple Swamp

rivers, but the two types can intergrade on some floodplains.

Conservation, Wildlife, and Management Considerations

Maintaining the hydrologic integrity of these stream drainages with upland buffers is key. These swamps typically have had few conflicting uses, although some have been recently harvested. ATV use has been observed at some sites.

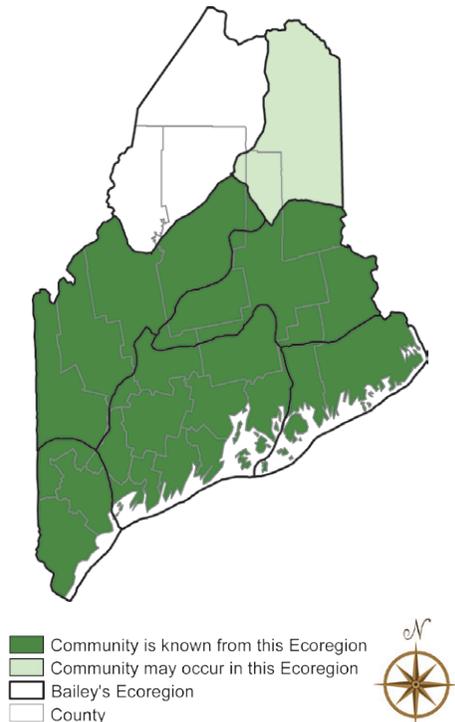
Red maple swamps often provide habitat in which spotted turtles hibernate. If wet Sphagnum hummocks are present, four-toed salamanders may breed in this community. Examples that occur on floodplains of streams and small rivers may contain wood turtles, which overwinter in the stream channel and forage in the floodplain. The silver-haired bat often roosts in riparian habitats in trees with loose bark. The northern waterthrush is a common associate of this community type. In the southern part of the state, the Louisiana waterthrush and yellow-throated vireo may be associates if the canopy is closed or nearly so.

Distribution

Statewide, but most common in the southern half of state. Extends southward and southwestward from Maine; eastward distribution unknown.

Landscape Pattern: Large Patch

Location Map



Characteristic Plants

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

Canopy

- Balsam fir
- Gray birch
- Northern white cedar
- Red maple*
- Red spruce

Sapling/shrub

- Arrowwood*
- Balsam fir
- Gray birch*
- Red spruce
- Speckled alder*
- Winterberry*

Herb

- Bluejoint*
- Flat-topped white aster*
- Interrupted fern
- Tussock sedge
- Royal fern*
- Sensitive fern*

Bryoid

- Sphagnum mosses*

Associated Rare Plants

- Smooth winterberry holly
- Spicebush
- Swamp saxifrage
- Swamp white oak
- Sweet pepper-bush

Associated Rare Animals

- Spotted turtle
- Wood turtle

Examples on Conservation Lands You Can Visit

- Kennebunk Plains Preserve - York Co.
- Mt Agamenticus - York Co.
- Steep Falls Wildlife Management Area - Cumberland Co.
- Waterboro Barrens Preserve - York Co.