

# Cold-air Talus Slope

State Rank S2

## Community Description

This boreal assemblage is characterized by patchy mats of dwarf shrubs among the rocks, with scattered and stunted spruce (usually black spruce). Labrador tea and black crowberry are the most characteristic shrubs. Herbs are very sparse. Foliose and fruticose lichens are often extensive.

## Soil and Site Characteristics

Sites occur near the base of somewhat sheltered or north-facing talus slopes where cold air collects. They are usually steep, though sometimes approaching level. The substrate is large talus blocks with pockets of organic duff among them. Ice blocks may persist into the summer in rock crevices.



Black Spruce

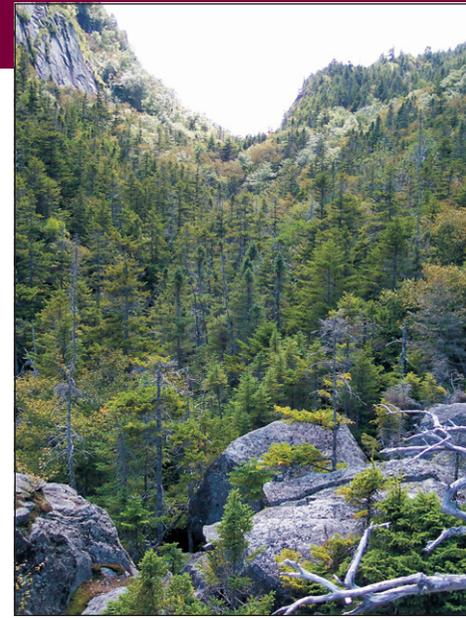
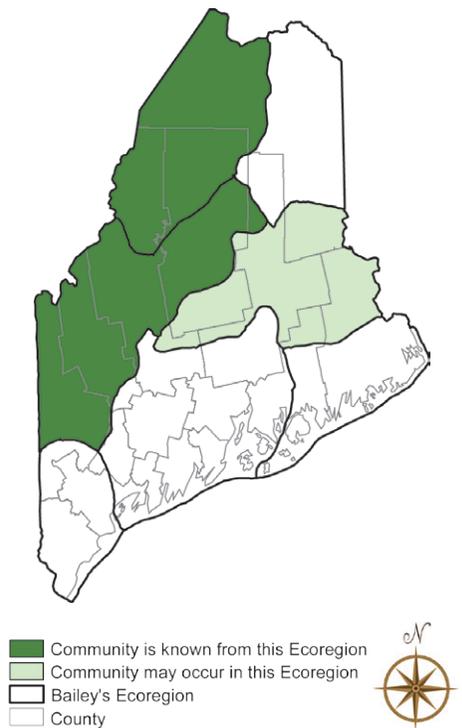
## Diagnostics

Sites occupy the base of talus slopes; mats of Labrador tea and other heath shrubs are characteristic, as are abundant fruticose and foliose lichens.

## Similar Types

Spruce Talus Woodlands lack the abundant Labrador tea characteristic of this community and also have fewer reindeer lichens. Other spruce woodland types (Red Spruce - Mixed Conifer Woodland and Black Spruce Woodland) have higher tree cover (>25%) and lower bryoid cover. Heath - Lichen Subalpine Slope Bogs are similar, but have more continuous vegetation, peat accumulation, and

## Location Map



Cold-Air Talus Slope

occur on upper slopes at higher elevations.

## Conservation, Wildlife, and Management Considerations

Known sites are on public lands or private conservation lands. One of the better known sites, Mahoosuc Notch, is traversed by the Appalachian Trail. Heavy foot traffic has caused some damage to the vegetation, but the community remains generally intact.

The long-tailed shrew and rock vole may show a preference for these rocky habitats.

## Distribution

Restricted in Maine to northern and montane areas; New England - Adirondack Province extending west and likely northeastward to the Gaspé Peninsula.

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

Black spruce

### Dwarf Shrub

Black crowberry\*

Labrador tea\*

Lowbush blueberry

Mountain cranberry

Sheep laurel

### Herb

Rock polypody

### Bryoid

Reindeer lichen\*

## Examples on Conservation Lands You Can Visit

- Deboullie Ponds Public Lands - Aroostook Co.
- Mahoosuc Public Land Unit - Oxford Co.



Lowbush Blueberry