Subalpine Meadow

State Rank S1

Community Description
These shrub and graminoid dominated meadows occur near treeline. Dominants vary according to substrate moisture but often include mountain alder, bluejoint, and meadowsweet. In drier areas, bush-honeysuckle may be prominent. This vegetation is taller and more dense than typical alpine dwarf shrub vegetation. Openings around pondshores or other disturbed areas may support rare plants.

Soil and Site Characteristics
Sites occupy upper mountain slopes, flats, or basins near or above treeline. Slopes vary from almost flat to quite steep, and substrate moisture varies from dryish to seepy soil conditions.

Diagnostics
Sites are in an alpine setting with dense mountain alder, bluejoint grass, and/or bush-honeysuckle; dwarf shrubs are absent or minor.

Similar Types
Other alpine and sub-alpine types have different characteristic species. However, this is not a well documented type, and its distribution and relationship to other alpine and subalpine vegetation types needs work.

Conservation, Wildlife, and Management Considerations
Both known occurrences in Maine are on protected lands. Hiker impacts have been minimal. Understanding the importance of fire and other disturbances to initiating and maintaining the vegetation in this community type warrants study.

Distribution
Upper-elevation ridges of Maine’s western and central mountains (mostly in the New England - Adirondack Province); may extend to Gaspé Peninsula.

Landscape Pattern: Small Patch

Characteristics

- Mountain Alder - Bush-honeysuckle Subalpine Meadow
- Soil and Site Characteristics
- Diagnostics
- Similar Types
- Conservation, Wildlife, and Management Considerations
- Distribution
- Landscape Pattern: Small Patch

Associated Rare Plants
- Black sedge
- Northern painted-cup
- Russsett sedge

Examples on Conservation Lands You Can Visit
- North Traveler, Baxter State Park – Piscataquis Co.

Characteristic Plants

- Sapling/shrub
  - Bush-honeysuckle
  - Meadowsweet
  - Mountain alder
  - Squashberry
- Dwarf Shrub
  - Lowbush blueberry
- Herb
  - Bluejoint
  - Gall of the earth
  - Large-leaved goldenrod
  - Low rough aster
  - Three-toothed cinquefoil

Bush-honeysuckle

Location Map

Examples on Conservation Lands You Can Visit

- North Traveler, Baxter State Park – Piscataquis Co.