

Transitional Floodplain Forest

MNHESP State Rank: S2

PHYSICAL

Hydrology Temporarily flooded.

Soil Mineral soils with redoximorphic features within 60 cm (24 in) of the surface.

Topography Generally flat or undulating surface.

Elevation Occurring from 294 – 298 m (965 – 977 ft).

Form Forested adjacent to river channels areas that are flooded during high-water events. Frequently with vernal flooded depressions that are utilized by a host of breeding amphibians. Scoured, sandy flood channels often are found within the forest.

DOMINANT PLANT SPECIES¹

Canopy Silver maple, boxelder, American elm, red maple, and eastern cottonwood.

Characteristics Tree size and age varies by site. Trees usually 25 – 65 cm (9 – 26 in) in diameter, some eastern cottonwood over 100 cm (39 in). Canopy height often 20 m (66 ft) or more. Tree age often less than 60 years.

Subcanopy Small canopy species, American hornbeam, and dotted hawthorn.

Characteristics Usually sparse or absent, but sometimes well developed in former agricultural areas where dominated by dotted hawthorn.

Shrubs Silky dogwood, red-osier dogwood, common buckthorn, and Morrow's honeysuckle.

Characteristics Often sparse and creating a park-like atmosphere. Latter two species non-native and invasive.



Herbs Ostrich fern, wood-nettle, sensitive fern, false-nettle, Moneywort, cuckoo-flower, garlic-mustard, and dames-rocket.

Characteristics Variable and dependent on site hydrology. Dense stands of robust herbs often present. Latter four species non-native and invasive.

Climbing Plants Wild cucumber and river grape.

Bryophytes Largely absent.

Notes The scoured meander scars are free of water for most of the season and commonly vegetated by ditch-stonecrop, water-pepper, wirestem muhly, and yellow wood-sorrel.

COMMON ANIMAL SPECIES²

Mammals White-footed mouse, meadow vole, northern short-tailed shrew, gray squirrel, eastern cottontail, beaver, mink, river otter, raccoon, white-tailed deer, red fox, coyote, and black bear.

Birds Downy woodpecker, eastern tufted titmouse, and Veery. Red-bellied woodpecker and Baltimore oriole, relatively rare in the primary study area, were seen in this community.

Herpetiles Wood frog, spotted salamander, northern leopard frog, green frog, spring peeper, painted turtle, and snapping turtle.

Fish Absent.

¹ Scientific names provided in Attachment F.

² Scientific names provided in Attachment C.

Notes Turtles were predatory species that moved to the pools when abundant frog larvae were present. Beavers foraged extensively in this community. Several coyote kills of cottontail seen. Fairy shrimp and fingernail clams occurred in vernal pools within this community.

CONSERVATION, DISTRIBUTION, AND NOTES

MNHESP State Rank³ S2.

Rare Species⁴ Eastern black currant (S4) and wood turtle (SC).

Distribution in MA Primarily from the western half of the state.

Distribution in the Study Area Most dominant forested community north of Yokum Brook; becomes limited to narrow strips along the river bank south of Yokum Brook confluence.

Variation Silver maple is dominant canopy tree but boxelder locally abundant, especially below confluence. Eastern cottonwood prevalent on East Branch Housatonic River.

Synonyms Palustrine Forested (Cowardin *et al.* 1979); Floodplain Forest (Weatherbee and Crow 1992).

REFERENCES

- Cowardin, L.M., V. Carter, F.C. Golet, and E.T. LaRoe. 1979. Classification of Wetlands and Deep Water Habitats of the United States. U.S. Government Printing Office.
- Massachusetts Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program. 1999. Massachusetts Natural Heritage Atlas: 2000-2001 Edition. Division of Fisheries and Wildlife, Westborough, MA, USA.
- Swain, P.C., and J.B. Kearsley. 2000. Classification of the Natural Communities of Massachusetts. Massachusetts Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program, Westborough, MA, USA.
- Weatherbee, P.B., and G.E. Crow. 1992. Natural plant communities of Berkshire County, Massachusetts. *Rhodora* 94:171-209.

³ State rank follows Swain and Kearsley 2000.

⁴ State rank and status follow MNHESP 1999.

