

Spruce–Fir–Northern Hardwood Forest

MNHESP State Rank: S4

PHYSICAL

Hydrology Upland.

Soil Mineral soils with oxidized soils and lacking redoximorphic features.

Topography Uneven ground and sometimes rocky.

Elevation Sampled occurrences at 540 and 576 m (1771 and 1890 ft).

Form Mixed conifer–hardwood forest of middle to upper elevations.

DOMINANT PLANT SPECIES¹

Canopy Red spruce, white spruce, red maple, black cherry, balsam fir, white birch, and American beech.

Characteristics Canopy often dense and creating a deeply shaded understory.

Subcanopy Mountain ash, smooth shadbush, yellow birch, and balsam fir.

Characteristics Poorly to moderately developed.

Shrubs Mountain maple, witch-hazel, beaked hazelnut, and balsam fir.

Characteristics Sparse.

Herbs Canada mayflower, ground-pine, gold thread, blue-bead lily, painted trillium, evergreen wood fern, and wild sarsaparilla.

Characteristics Often sparse due to deep shade produced by canopy.

Climbing Plants Absent.



Bryophytes Usually well-developed and comprised of *Leucobryum*, *Polytrichum*, and *Sphagnum* (near wetland edge).

Notes Understory variable in areal cover and dependent, at least in part, on density of canopy. Considerable areas devoid of vegetation and covered by conifer leaf litter.

COMMON ANIMAL SPECIES²

Mammals Red squirrel, snow-shoe hare, coyote, fisher, and white-tailed deer.

Birds Golden-crowned kinglet, black-throated blue warbler, ovenbird, hermit thrush, and red-breasted nuthatch.

Herpetiles Wood frog, American toad, spotted salamander, and spring peeper.

Fish Absent.

Notes Community adjacent to aquatic areas used by breeding amphibians and therefore important for adult stages.

CONSERVATION, DISTRIBUTION, AND NOTES

MNHESP State Rank³ S4.

Rare Species None observed.

¹ Scientific names provided in Attachment F.

² Scientific names provided in Attachment C.

³ State rank follows Swain and Kearsley 2000.

Distribution in MA Primarily found in the northern and western portion of the state.

Distribution in the Study Area Found in higher elevation portions of October Mountain State Forest and small stands adjacent to Ashley Lake.

Variation One site dominated by white spruce, which is unusual in the state (red spruce is common).

Synonyms Mesic northern conifer forest (as to the lower elevation forms) (Weatherbee and Crow 1992).

REFERENCES

- 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.