

BioMap and Living Waters

Guiding Land Conservation for Biodiversity in Massachusetts

Core Habitats of Amesbury

This report and associated map provide information about important sites for biodiversity conservation in your area.

This information is intended for conservation planning, and is not intended for use in state regulations.

Produced by:

**Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program
Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife
Executive Office of Environmental Affairs
Commonwealth of Massachusetts**

Produced in 2004



BioMap and Living Waters: Guiding Land Conservation for Biodiversity in Massachusetts

Table of Contents

Introduction

- What is a Core Habitat?
- Core Habitats and Land Conservation
In Support of Core Habitats

Understanding Core Habitat Species, Community, and Habitat Lists

- What's in the List?
- What does 'Status' mean?

Understanding Core Habitat Summaries

Next Steps

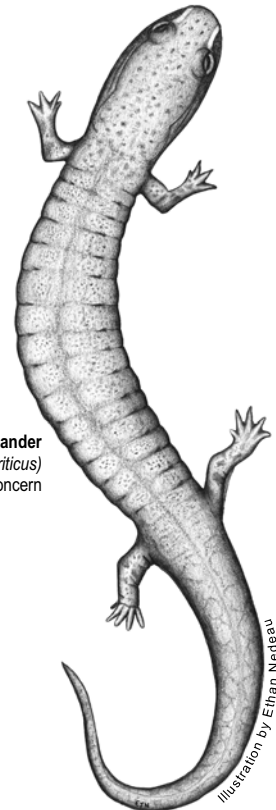
- Protecting Larger Core Habitats
- Additional Information

Local Core Habitat Information*

- BioMap: Species and Natural Communities
- BioMap: Core Habitat Summaries
- Living Waters: Species and Habitats
- Living Waters: Core Habitat Summaries

* Depending on the location of Core Habitats,
your city or town may not have all of these sections.

Spring Salamander
(*Gyrinophilus porphyriticus*)
Species of Special Concern



Funding for this project was made available by the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs, contributions to the Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Fund, and through the State Wildlife Grants Program of the US Fish & Wildlife Service.



**Natural Heritage
& Endangered Species
Program**

Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife
North Drive, Westborough, MA 01581
Tel: (508) 792-7270, Ext. 200 Fax: (508) 792-7821
<http://www.nhesp.org>

For more information on rare species and natural communities, please see our fact sheets online at www.nhesp.org



BioMap and Living Waters: Guiding Land Conservation for Biodiversity in Massachusetts

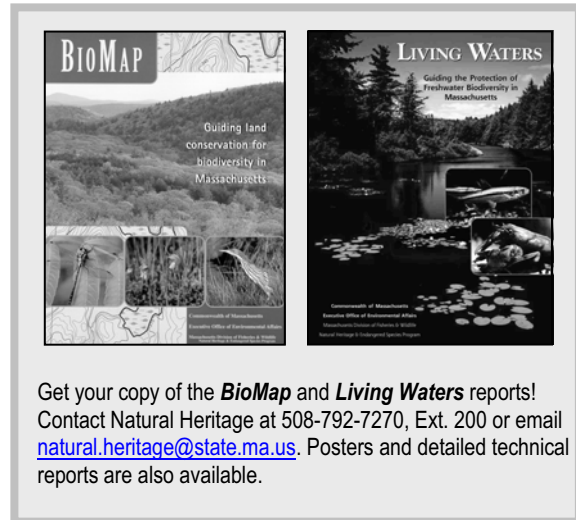
Introduction

In this report, the Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program provides you with site-specific biodiversity information for your area. Protecting our biodiversity today will help ensure the full variety of species and natural communities that comprise our native flora and fauna will persist for generations to come.

The information in this report is the result of two statewide biodiversity conservation planning projects, *BioMap* and *Living Waters*. The goal of the BioMap project, completed in 2001, was to identify and delineate the most important areas for the long-term viability of terrestrial, wetland, and estuarine elements of biodiversity in Massachusetts. The goal of the Living Waters project, completed in 2003, was to identify and delineate the rivers, streams, lakes, and ponds that are important for freshwater biodiversity in the Commonwealth. These two conservation plans are based on documented observations of rare species, natural communities, and exemplary habitats.

What is a Core Habitat?

Both BioMap and Living Waters delineate *Core Habitats* that identify the most critical sites for biodiversity conservation across the state. Core Habitats represent habitat for the state's most viable rare plant and animal populations and include exemplary natural communities and aquatic habitats. Core Habitats represent a wide diversity of rare species and natural communities (see Table 1), and these areas are also thought to contain virtually all of the other described species in Massachusetts. Statewide, BioMap Core Habitats encompass 1,380,000 acres of uplands and wetlands, and Living Waters identifies 429 Core Habitats in rivers, streams, lakes, and ponds.



Core Habitats and Land Conservation

One of the most effective ways to protect biodiversity for future generations is to protect Core Habitats from adverse human impacts through land conservation. For Living Waters Core Habitats, protection efforts should focus on the *riparian areas*, the areas of land adjacent to water bodies. A naturally vegetated buffer that extends 330 feet (100 meters) from the water's edge helps to maintain cooler water temperature and to maintain the nutrients, energy, and natural flow of water needed by freshwater species.

In Support of Core Habitats

To further ensure the protection of Core Habitats and Massachusetts' biodiversity in the long-term, the BioMap and Living Waters projects identify two additional areas that help support Core Habitats.

In BioMap, areas shown as *Supporting Natural Landscape* provide buffers around the Core Habitats, connectivity between Core Habitats, sufficient space for ecosystems to function, and contiguous undeveloped habitat for common species. Supporting Natural Landscape was



**Natural Heritage
& Endangered Species
Program**

Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife
North Drive, Westborough, MA 01581
Tel: (508) 792-7270, Ext. 200 Fax: (508) 792-7821
<http://www.nhesp.org>

For more information on rare species and natural communities, please see our fact sheets online at www.nhesp.org



BioMap and Living Waters: Guiding Land Conservation for Biodiversity in Massachusetts

generated using a Geographic Information Systems (GIS) model, and its exact boundaries are less important than the general areas that it identifies. Supporting Natural Landscape represents potential land protection priorities once Core Habitat protection has been addressed.

In Living Waters, *Critical Supporting Watersheds* highlight the immediate portion of the watershed that sustains, or possibly degrades, each freshwater Core Habitat. These areas were also identified using a GIS model. Critical Supporting Watersheds represent developed and undeveloped lands, and can be quite large. Critical Supporting Watersheds can be helpful in land-use planning, and while they are not shown on these maps, they can be viewed in the Living Waters report or downloaded from www.mass.gov/mgis.

Understanding Core Habitat Species, Community, and Habitat Lists

What's in the List?

Included in this report is a list of the species, natural communities, and/or aquatic habitats for each Core Habitat in your city or town. The lists are organized by Core Habitat number.

For the larger Core Habitats that span more than one town, the species and community lists refer to the entire Core Habitat, not just the portion that falls within your city or town. For a list of all the state-listed rare species within your city or town's boundary, whether or not they are in Core Habitat, please see the town rare species lists available at www.nhesp.org.

The list of species and communities within a Core Habitat contains only the species and

Table 1. The number of rare species and types of natural communities explicitly included in the BioMap and Living Waters conservation plans, relative to the total number of native species statewide.

BioMap		
Biodiversity Group	Species and Verified Natural Community Types	
	Included in BioMap	Total Statewide
Vascular Plants	246	1,538
Birds	21	221 breeding species
Reptiles	11	25
Amphibians	6	21
Mammals	4	85
Moths and Butterflies	52	An estimated 2,500 to 3,000
Damselflies and Dragonflies	25	An estimated 165
Beetles	10	An estimated 2,500 to 4,000
Natural Communities	92	> 105 community types
Living Waters		
Biodiversity Group	Species	
	Included in Living Waters	Total Statewide
Aquatic Vascular Plants	23	114
Fishes	11	57
Mussels	7	12
Aquatic Invertebrates	23	An estimated > 2500

natural communities that were explicitly included in a given BioMap or Living Waters Core Habitat. Other rare species or examples of other natural communities may fall within the Core Habitat, but for various reasons are not included in the list. For instance, there are a few rare species that are omitted from the list or summary because of their particular sensitivity to the threat of collection. Likewise, the content of many very small Core Habitats are not described in this report or list, often because they contain a single location of a rare plant



**Natural Heritage
& Endangered Species
Program**

Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife
North Drive, Westborough, MA 01581
Tel: (508) 792-7270, Ext. 200 Fax: (508) 792-7821
<http://www.nhesp.org>

For more information on rare species and natural communities, please see our fact sheets online at www.nhesp.org



BioMap and Living Waters: Guiding Land Conservation for Biodiversity in Massachusetts

species. Some Core Habitats were created for suites of common species, such as forest birds, which are particularly threatened by habitat fragmentation. In these cases, the individual common species are not listed.

What does 'Status' mean?

The Division of Fisheries and Wildlife determines a status category for each rare species listed under the Massachusetts Endangered Species Act, M.G.L. c.131A, and its implementing regulations, 321 CMR 10.00. Rare species are categorized as Endangered, Threatened, or of Special Concern according to the following:

- **Endangered** species are in danger of extinction throughout all or a significant portion of their range or are in danger of extirpation from Massachusetts.
- **Threatened** species are likely to become Endangered in Massachusetts in the foreseeable future throughout all or a significant portion of their range.
- **Special Concern** species have suffered a decline that could threaten the species if allowed to continue unchecked or occur in such small numbers or with such restricted distribution or specialized habitat requirements that they could easily become Threatened in Massachusetts.

In addition, the Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program maintains an unofficial **watch list** of plants that are tracked due to potential conservation interest or concern, but are not regulated under the Massachusetts Endangered Species Act or other laws or regulations. Likewise, described natural communities are not regulated any laws or regulations, but they can help to identify ecologically important areas that are worthy of protection. The status of natural

Legal Protection of Biodiversity

BioMap and Living Waters present a powerful vision of what Massachusetts would look like with full protection of the land that supports most of our biodiversity. To create this vision, some populations of state-listed rare species were deemed more likely to survive over the long-term than others.

Regardless of their potential viability, all sites of state-listed species have full legal protection under the Massachusetts Endangered Species Act (M.G.L. c.131A) and its implementing regulations (321 CMR 10.00). Habitat of state-listed wildlife is also protected under the Wetlands Protection Act Regulations (310 CMR 10.37 and 10.59). The **Massachusetts Natural Heritage Atlas** shows **Priority Habitats**, which are used for regulation under the Massachusetts Endangered Species Act and Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act (M.G.L. c.30) and **Estimated Habitats**, which are used for regulation of rare wildlife habitat under the Wetlands Protection Act. For more information on rare species regulations, see the *Massachusetts Natural Heritage Atlas*, available from the Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program in book and CD formats.

BioMap and Living Waters are conservation planning tools and do not, in any way, supplant the Estimated and Priority Habitat Maps which have regulatory significance. Unless and until the combined BioMap and Living Waters vision is fully realized, we must continue to protect all populations of our state-listed species and their habitats through environmental regulation.

communities reflects the documented number and acreages of each community type in the state:

- **Critically Imperiled** communities typically have 5 or fewer documented sites or have very few remaining acres in the state.
- **Imperiled** communities typically have 6-20 sites or few remaining acres in the state.
- **Vulnerable** communities typically have 21-100 sites or limited acreage across the state.
- **Secure** communities typically have over 100 sites or abundant acreage across the state; however excellent examples are identified as Core Habitat to ensure continued protection.



**Natural Heritage
& Endangered Species
Program**

Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife
North Drive, Westborough, MA 01581
Tel: (508) 792-7270, Ext. 200 Fax: (508) 792-7821
<http://www.nhesp.org>

For more information on rare species and natural communities, please see our fact sheets online at www.nhesp.org



BioMap and Living Waters: Guiding Land Conservation for Biodiversity in Massachusetts

Understanding Core Habitat Summaries

Following the BioMap and Living Waters Core Habitat species and community lists, there is a descriptive summary of each Core Habitat that occurs in your city or town. This summary highlights some of the outstanding characteristics of each Core Habitat, and will help you learn more about your city or town's biodiversity. You can find out more information about many of these species and natural communities by looking at specific *fact sheets* at www.nhesp.org.

Next Steps

BioMap and Living Waters were created in part to help cities and towns prioritize their land protection efforts. While there are many reasons to conserve land – drinking water protection, recreation, agriculture, aesthetics, and others – BioMap and Living Waters Core Habitats are especially helpful to municipalities seeking to protect the rare species, natural communities, and overall biodiversity within their boundaries. Please use this report and map along with the rare species and community fact sheets to appreciate and understand the biological treasures in your city or town.

Protecting Larger Core Habitats

Core Habitats vary considerably in size. For example, the average BioMap Core Habitat is 800 acres, but Core Habitats can range from less than 10 acres to greater than 100,000 acres. These larger areas reflect the amount of land needed by some animal species for breeding, feeding, nesting, overwintering, and long-term survival. Protecting areas of this size can be

very challenging, and requires developing partnerships with neighboring towns.

Prioritizing the protection of certain areas within larger Core Habitats can be accomplished through further consultation with Natural Heritage Program biologists, and through additional field research to identify the most important areas of the Core Habitat.

Additional Information

If you have any questions about this report, or if you need help protecting land for biodiversity in your community, the Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program staff looks forward to working with you.

Contact the Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program:

by Phone 508-792-7270, Ext. 200

by Fax: 508-792-7821

by Email: natural.heritage@state.ma.us.

by Mail: North Drive
Westborough, MA 01581

The GIS datalayers of BioMap and Living Waters Core Habitats are available for download from MassGIS: www.mass.gov/mgis

Check out www.nhesp.org for information on:

- Rare species in your town
- Rare species fact sheets
- BioMap and Living Waters projects
- Natural Heritage publications, including:
 - * Field guides
 - * Natural Heritage Atlas, and more!



**Natural Heritage
& Endangered Species
Program**

Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife
North Drive, Westborough, MA 01581
Tel: (508) 792-7270, Ext. 200 Fax: (508) 792-7821
<http://www.nhesp.org>

For more information on rare species and natural communities, please see our fact sheets online at www.nhesp.org

BioMap: Species and Natural Communities

Amesbury

Core Habitat BM3

Natural Communities

<u>Common Name</u>	<u>Scientific Name</u>	<u>Status</u>
Estuarine Intertidal: Freshwater Tidal Marsh		Critically Imperiled
Estuarine Intertidal: Salt Marsh		Vulnerable
Small-River Floodplain Forest		Imperiled

Plants

<u>Common Name</u>	<u>Scientific Name</u>	<u>Status</u>
Eaton's Beggar-Ticks	<i>Bidens eatonii</i>	Endangered
Estuary Pipewort	<i>Eriocaulon parkeri</i>	Endangered
River Birch	<i>Betula nigra</i>	Watch Listed
River Bulrush	<i>Bolboschoenus fluviatilis</i>	Special Concern
Saline Sedge	<i>Carex recta</i>	Endangered
Silverling	<i>Paronychia argyrocoma</i>	Endangered

Invertebrates

<u>Common Name</u>	<u>Scientific Name</u>	<u>Status</u>
New England Siltsnail	<i>Cincinnatia winkleyi</i>	Special Concern

Vertebrates

<u>Common Name</u>	<u>Scientific Name</u>	<u>Status</u>
Bald Eagle	<i>Haliaeetus leucocephalus</i>	Endangered



**Natural Heritage
& Endangered Species
Program**

Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife
North Drive, Westborough, MA 01581
Tel: (508) 792-7270, Ext. 200 Fax: (508) 792-7821
<http://www.nhesp.org>

For more information on rare species and natural communities, please see our fact sheets online at www.nhesp.org

BioMap: Core Habitat Summaries

Amesbury

Core Habitat BM3

This 11-mile reach of the lower Merrimack River, with its bordering wetlands and uplands, runs through Groveland, Haverhill, West Newbury, Merrimac, Amesbury, Newburyport, and Salisbury. It includes Ram, Carr, Eagle, and Deer islands in Salisbury, and wetlands and tidal creeks at Boggy Meadows and Town Creek. Despite development crowding the river in many places, this section of the river supports a rich diversity of rare species and uncommon natural communities. Small River Floodplain Forests and Freshwater Tidal Marshes are found along the river's edge above where salt water reaches. Here these communities host several rare plants and invertebrate wildlife species. Perhaps the most spectacular rare animal living in this Core is the Bald Eagle, which fishes and overwinters along the Lower Merrimack. Protecting undeveloped land anywhere in this Core Habitat, or in adjacent Supporting Natural Landscape, is vital given there is so little undeveloped land left in the area. Protecting land upstream along the river's tributaries will also help improve the quality of water flowing into the Merrimack River and will help ensure the long-term viability of this exceptional natural landscape.

Natural Communities

This Core Habitat contains one of the eight remaining, reasonably good-quality, Small-River Floodplain Forests in the state. This type of Floodplain Forest develops along small rivers and on shores of islands in the Merrimack River, and differs from Major-River Floodplain Forests in that Small-River Floodplain Forests are subject to a smaller volume of floodwater and, therefore, to less scouring by the water. This Small-River Floodplain Forest occurs with a high-quality and very diverse Freshwater Tidal Marsh. Freshwater Tidal Marshes are flooded by tides twice a day, but as they are located just upstream of the edge of saltwater, the tides are of freshwater, not salt. Freshwater Tidal Marshes are globally rare and often support rare and unusual plants. Downriver, this Core Habitat is also part of a complex that includes the 17,000 acres of Estuarine Intertidal Salt Marsh of the Parker River. This is the largest contiguous acreage of Salt Marsh in New England. The Salt Marsh community type is a graminoid-dominated, tidally flooded coastal community with several vegetative zones. Salt Marshes form in areas subject to oceanic tides, but sheltered from wave energy. Here the size of the Salt Marsh alone assures an abundance of microhabitats and mix of conditions that are important for plants and animals alike.

Plants

This Core Habitat contains several rare plant species that are adapted to brackish-to-freshwater rivershore conditions, including two globally rare species, Eaton's Beggar-Ticks and Estuary Pipewort.

Invertebrates

This Core Habitat includes a stretch of the Merrimack River in Amesbury, West Newbury, and Newburyport that is habitat for the New England Siltsnail. This rare snail, which is endemic to New England, inhabits brackish marshes at the mouths of the Indian River, Presbus Creek, Goodwin Creek, and the Artichoke River. These four marshes, along with a fifth along the north shore of the Merrimack in Amesbury, provide multiple habitats connected by the river, all of which are apparently currently unprotected.



**Natural Heritage
& Endangered Species
Program**

Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife
North Drive, Westborough, MA 01581
Tel: (508) 792-7270, Ext. 200 Fax: (508) 792-7821
<http://www.nhesp.org>

For more information on rare species and natural communities, please see our fact sheets online at www.nhesp.org

BioMap: Core Habitat Summaries

Amesbury

Vertebrates

The lower Merrimack River and forests along its edges provide some of the most important feeding and roosting habitat for wintering and non-breeding Bald Eagles in the state. As many as 11 individual eagles have been seen at one time along a section of the river in Newburyport. As regional Bald Eagle populations continue to recover, eagles are likely to nest along this stretch of the Merrimack River in the future if sufficient forested riparian habitat is preserved along its banks.



**Natural Heritage
& Endangered Species
Program**

Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife
North Drive, Westborough, MA 01581
Tel: (508) 792-7270, Ext. 200 Fax: (508) 792-7821
<http://www.nhesp.org>

For more information on rare species and natural communities, please see our fact sheets online at www.nhesp.org

Living Waters: Species and Habitats

Amesbury

Core Habitat LW076

Fishes

<u>Common Name</u>	<u>Scientific Name</u>	<u>Status</u>
Atlantic Sturgeon	<i>Acipenser oxyrinchus</i>	Endangered
Shortnose Sturgeon	<i>Acipenser brevirostrum</i>	Endangered

Core Habitat LW276

Plants

<u>Common Name</u>	<u>Scientific Name</u>	<u>Status</u>
Vasey's Pondweed	<i>Potamogeton vaseyi</i>	Endangered

Core Habitat LW308

Invertebrates

<u>Common Name</u>	<u>Scientific Name</u>	<u>Status</u>
New England Siltsnail	<i>Cincinnatia winkleyi</i>	Special Concern

Fishes

<u>Common Name</u>	<u>Scientific Name</u>	<u>Status</u>
Atlantic Sturgeon	<i>Acipenser oxyrinchus</i>	Endangered
Shortnose Sturgeon	<i>Acipenser brevirostrum</i>	Endangered



**Natural Heritage
& Endangered Species
Program**

Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife
North Drive, Westborough, MA 01581
Tel: (508) 792-7270, Ext. 200 Fax: (508) 792-7821
<http://www.nhesp.org>

For more information on rare species and natural communities, please see our fact sheets online at www.nhesp.org

Living Waters: Core Habitat Summaries

Amesbury

Core Habitat LW076

This Core Habitat provides important river habitat for the state-Endangered Atlantic Sturgeon. This large, prehistoric-looking fish uses this section of the Merrimack River from May to October. The state- and federally Endangered Shortnose Sturgeon can also be found here after it has spawned further upstream.

Core Habitat LW276

The Endangered Vasey's Pondweed, a delicate, submerged plant with tiny floating leaves, makes its home in Tuxbury Pond. Native freshwater plants like Vasey's Pondweed are an important component of aquatic ecosystems, providing habitat and nutrition for fishes and invertebrates, and adding oxygen to the water through photosynthesis.

Core Habitat LW308

This section of the Merrimack River contains an important overwintering and foraging area for the state- and federally-Endangered Shortnose Sturgeon. This site is where young mature into adults. The state-Endangered Atlantic Sturgeon may occasionally be found here in late summer as well. Sturgeons are long-lived, prehistoric-looking fishes belonging to an ancient group that is more than 200 million years old. Controlling sediment runoff from developed areas, and protecting the remaining undeveloped areas, will help maintain this key site for freshwater biodiversity.

Also within this Core Habitat, a small, shallow area of the Merrimack River in West Newbury provides brackish marsh habitat for the rare New England Siltsnail.



**Natural Heritage
& Endangered Species
Program**

Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife
North Drive, Westborough, MA 01581
Tel: (508) 792-7270, Ext. 200 Fax: (508) 792-7821
<http://www.nhesp.org>

For more information on rare species and natural communities, please see our fact sheets online at www.nhesp.org

Help Save Endangered Wildlife!

Please contribute on your Massachusetts income tax form or directly to the



Natural Heritage &
Endangered Species Fund

To learn more about the Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program and the Commonwealth's rare species, visit our web site at: www.nhesp.org.