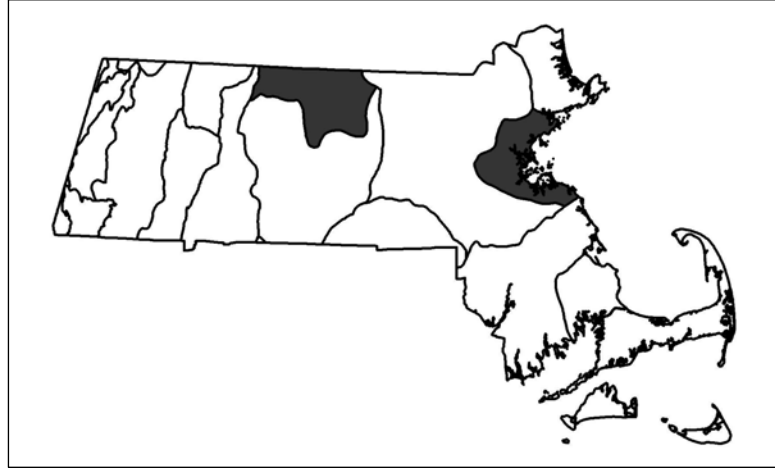


Community Name: Open Oak Forest / Woodland

Community Code: CT1A3D0000

SRANK: S3



Concept: Open Oak Forests / Woodlands are savanna or park-like communities on mountain slopes with short trees scattered over a grassy or low shrub understory around small rock outcrops. They often occur between a rocky summit and the surrounding taller forest.

Environmental Setting A savanna-like area on slopes or near the summit of mountains with rock outcrops. Although often associated with Acidic Rocky Summit/Rock Outcrop Communities, it seems to need a gradual slope and does not occur on steep slopes below some summits. The Open Oak area may include small areas of Rocky Summit or Rock Outcrop, which if larger would be identified as separate community occurrences. At least one site has abundant charcoal and charred wood, and charring on the base of sprout oaks. Soils are very shallow to bedrock. Surrounding landscape is forested.

Vegetation Description An open canopy at about 8m dominated by Red Oak (*Quercus rubra*) with about a 37% cover, with a lower cover of White Oak (*Q. alba*) (approx. 5%), and approx. 5% cover of Red Maple (*Acer rubrum*). Many of the trees are multiple-stemmed. A sparse (<25% cover) subcanopy (2-5m) has Hop-hornbeam (*Ostrya virginiana*) and Striped Maple (*A. pensylvanicum*). A slightly shorter tall shrub layer of approx. 30% cover is dominated by Striped Maple, Red and White Oaks, and Maple-leaf Viburnum (*Viburnum acerifolium*). A more abundant low shrub layer has patches of Huckleberry (*Gaylussacia baccata*), Chokeberry (*Aronia melanocarpa*), Mountain Laurel (*Kalmia latifolia*), and Early Sweet Lowbush Blueberry (*Vaccinium pallidum*) with other scattered woody species. The herbaceous layer is continuous, except on the rock outcrops, with patches of different dominants. Lowbush Blueberry (*Vaccinium angustifolium*) dominates (approx. 67% in patches) and seedlings of forest trees (oaks, maple, hemlock) with grasses and sedges, forbs, ferns and mosses make up the rest of the layer. Common Hairgrass (*Deschampsia flexuosa*) is common in the balds and in the Open Oak Woodland. Other species include: Pale corydalis (*Capnoides* (formerly *Corydalis*) *sempervirens*, Early Goldenrod (*Solidago juncea*), Spreading Ricegrass (*Oryzopsis asperifolia*), Fringed Bindweed (*Fallopia cilinodis*, was *Polygonum cilinode*), Running Shadbush (*Amelanchier spicata*, was *A. stolonifera*), Downy Goldenrod (*Solidago puberula*), and Wild Columbine (*Aquilegia canadensis*).

Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program, Massachusetts Division of Fisheries & Wildlife

Habitat Values for Associated Fauna:

These small patch communities of transition areas would constitute only parts of the habitats of most animals found in them. Acorns are used as important food for white-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*), black bear (*Ursus americanus*), grey squirrels (*Sciurus carolinensis*), other small rodents, and Wild Turkeys (*Meleagris gallopavo*) and other birds. The understory of blueberries and huckleberries is used by many of these same species in areas with sufficiently large forests to provide all the habitat needs. Passerine birds of oak forests include Red-eyed Vireo (*Vireo olivaceus*), White-breasted Nuthatch (*Sitta carolinensis*), Ovenbird (*Seiurus aurocapillus*), Black-and-white Warbler (*Mniotilta varia*), Scarlet Tanager (*Piranga olivacea*), Great Crested Flycatcher (*Miarchus crinitus*), and Downy Woodpecker (*Picoides pubescens*). Small mammals would include those of dry habitats such as white footed mouse (*Peromyscus leucopus*), red-backed vole (*Clethrionomys gapperi*), and short-tailed shrew (*Blarina brevicauda*). Snakes would be those of dry areas, such as black racer (*Coluber constrictor*), ringneck (*Diadophis punctatus*), and redbelly snake (*Storeria occipitomaculata*). No turtles, frogs or toads would be expected.

Associated Rare Plants: None known

Associated Rare Animals: None known

Examples with Public Access:

Little Watatic Mt.; town land at Wright's Pond, Middlesex Fells.

Threats:

None obvious

Management Needs:

Inventory

It is likely to be more common than currently known.

Synonyms:

USNVC/TNC:

MA (old name):

ME:

NH:

VT:

NY:

CT:

RI:

Weatherbee:

Author:

P. Swain

Date:

7/28/2011