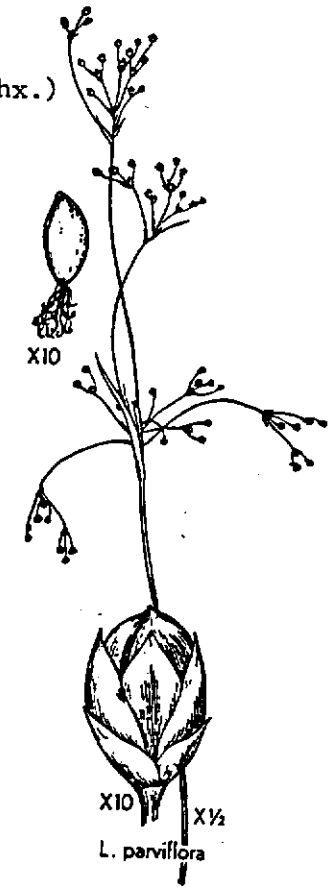
Natural Heritage & Endangered Species
Program
Division of Fisheries & Wildlife
Route 135
Westborough, MA 01581
(508)792-7270, ext. 200

MASSACHUSETTS RARE AND ENDANGERED PLANTS

BLACK-FRUITED WOODRUSH

(Luzula parviflora (Ehrh.) Desv. ssp. melanocarpa Michx.)



Gleason, H.A. The New Britton and Brown Illustrated Flora of the Northeastern U.S. and Adjacent Canada. New York Botanical Garden, 1952.

DESCRIPTION

Black-fruited Woodrush is a perennial herb, 15-36" (0.4-1m) tall. It has one to several flowering stems arising from a basal tussock of leaves. Basal leaves are flat, glabrous (smooth) or nearly so, pale green, and about ½" wide. Stem leaves are much smaller. Terminal brownish flower clusters occur on curved-spreading, drooping branches. Fruits are dark brown and less than 1/8" long. Flowering season is mid June-July; fruiting occurs from July-September.

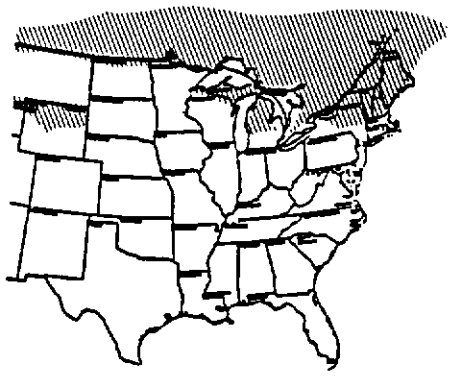
SIMILAR SPECIES IN MASSACHUSETTS

Woodrushes look superficially like grasses and sedges. Like grasses, woodrushes have stems rounded in cross-section; most sedges are triangular. Unlike either family, woodrushes clearly have flower parts in 3's -- 3 sepals and 3 petals which all look alike, and 3-6 stamens. The only other woodrush in Massachusetts which resembles L. parviflora is Sylvan Woodrush, L. acuminata, of rich mesic forests. It is smaller than L. parviflora (only 4-15" or 10-40cm. tall) with longer flowers and fruits (1/8-1/4") and simple unbranched flower stalks.

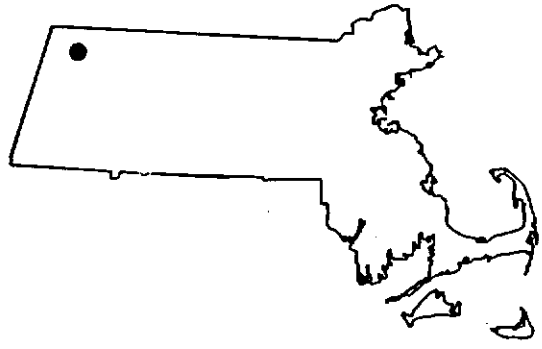
HABITAT IN MASSACHUSETTS

Black-fruited Woodrush is found only at high elevations in this state. Growing in scattered colonies containing a few individuals, Luzula parviflora inhabits roadsides, trailsides, and natural openings in boreal forests. In other states it favors cold, mossy banks, dry, open, montane woods, and alpine clearings.

(continued overleaf)



Distribution of Black-fruited Woodrush



● Verified since 1978
○ Reported prior to 1978

Distribution in Massachusetts by Town

RANGE

Black-fruited Woodrush is circumpolar; our subspecies ranges from Labrador to Alaska, south to the mountains of New England, New York, northern Michigan, Wyoming, and California.

POPULATION STATUS

Black-fruited Woodrush is considered "Endangered" in Massachusetts. Currently there is only one known population in the state which has existed at least since 1906. Reasons for this species' rarity include scarcity of suitable habitat and its occurrence here at the southeast edge of its range.