

Open Talus/Coarse Boulder Community

State Rank: S2 - Imperiled



Open Talus with more trees than usually encountered. Photo: Chris Buelow, NHESP.

Description: Open Talus/Coarse Boulder Communities have few trees casting shade on the occasional vines and scattered herbaceous plants growing from crevices among boulders. The community develops on dry to mesic conditions among loose, exposed large boulders on rocky slopes often below cliffs or rock outcrops. Soil, found between the boulders, is usually shallow, but may be moist and loamy with deciduous litter.

Open Talus/Coarse Boulder Communities are sparsely vegetated communities of vines and scattered herbaceous plants on moss or lichen covered boulders with deciduous litter in crevices and no to little tree canopy.

Characteristic Species: Vines, particularly Virginia creeper and poison ivy, occasionally with fringed bindweed, are usually dominant on unshaded, open talus rocks. Clematis and climbing fumitory are occasional, not at every site. Marginal wood fern, rock polypody, pink corydalis, and others contribute to the herbaceous flora, sometimes growing in shallow depressions on rocks. Raspberries and grapes are occasional.



Climbing fumitory, an herbaceous vine.. Photo: Bryan A. Connolly, NHESP.

Differentiating from Related Communities: Small (<5000 sq. ft.) occurrences at the base of cliffs would be included with the cliff or surrounding forest. Forested areas lower in the boulder field are considered to be a different

community, usually part of the prevailing forest.

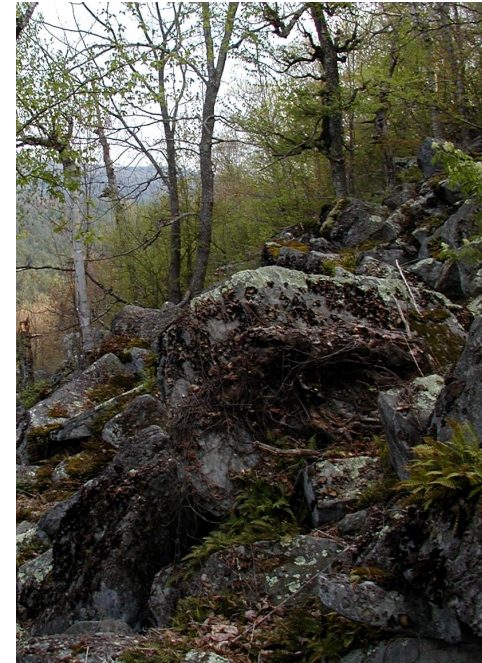
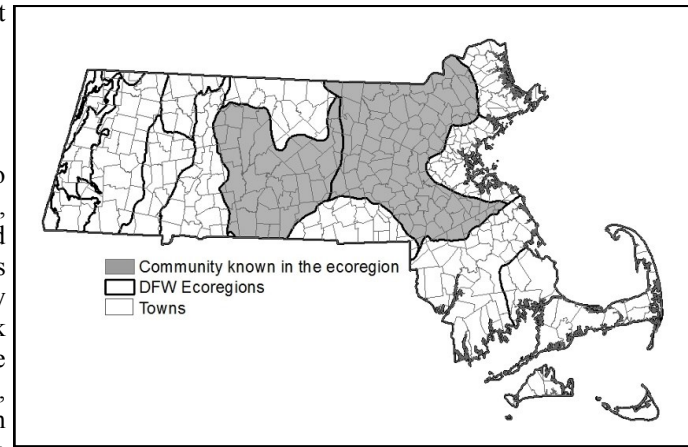
Habitat for Associated Fauna:

Most animals respond to the size of boulders, cover, moisture, and surroundings of the talus slope. Occasionally Turkey Vultures or Black Vultures nest in large boulder fields, but snakes, for example, North American racer, eastern milksnake, eastern ratsnake and timber rattlesnakes, hibernate in dens in talus with smaller stones. Song birds of talus slopes tend to be those of the surrounding forests.

Examples with Public Access: Palmer WMA, Palmer. Blue Hills Reservation, Milton.



Climbing fumitory in flower with poison ivy. Photo: Patricia Swain, NHESP.



Open Talus with lichen on the boulders. Photo: Chris Buelow, NHESP.

