

Birch - Oak Rocky Woodland

State Rank S3

Community Description

These community types are partial canopy deciduous woodlands or patches of woodland among talus areas. Overall canopy closure may be <25% when the open areas are included. Paper birch, red oak, and/or yellow birch are dominant. Sugar maple, if present, is not abundant. Marginal wood-fern, rock polypody, and poison ivy are characteristic of the herb layer, which is best developed in open patches. Vegetation is generally very patchy, developing in pockets among the rocks.

Soil and Site Characteristics

Sites typically occur on dry, acidic talus substrates with various aspects. Documented elevations are from nearly sea level to about 1500'.

Diagnostics

Sites occur on talus substrate; conifer cover can be one-fourth of the canopy, ironwood is absent and birches are common.

Similar Types

Ironwood - Oak - Ash Woodlands are similar. They may have a high cover of red oak, but also include ironwood and sometimes sugar maple. Birches are less common, and the herbaceous flora includes rich site indicators that are absent from this type. Other community types dominated by red oak occur on thin soil over bedrock or on deeper soils. Oak - Pine Woodlands, the most similar, typically include bracken fern and lowbush blueberry, which are rarely (or only sparsely) found in talus woodlands.



Paper Birch

Conservation, Wildlife, and Management Considerations

Talus woodlands receive little human use because of their inaccessibility and low timber value; however, areas at the base of talus slopes that receive water and nutrients from above sometimes have enough large trees to make logging economical. Conservation of these sites should include the range of talus forest cover, from the base of the slope on up, with a buffer of adjacent forest cover.

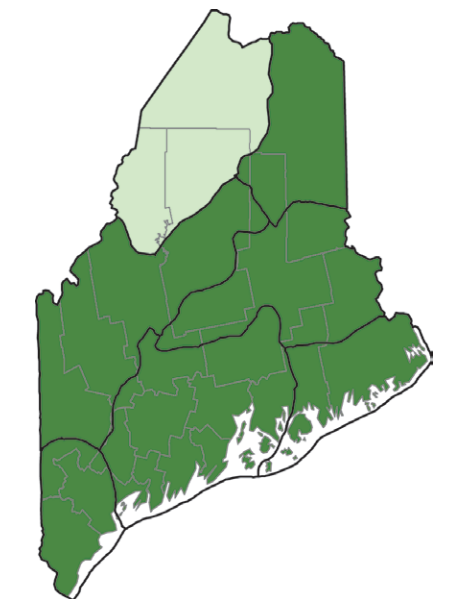
South facing occurrences of this type in the southern part of the state may have provided historical habitat for the timber rattlesnake, which is believed to have been extirpated from Maine.

Distribution

Not well documented. Extends westward from Maine, and possibly in other directions.

Landscape Pattern: Small Patch

Location Map



Community is known from this Ecoregion
 Community may occur in this Ecoregion
 Bailey's Ecoregion
 County



Striped Maple

Characteristic Plants

These plants are frequently found in this community type. Those with an asterisk are often diagnostic of this community.

Canopy

- Big-toothed aspen
- Blue birch*
- Paper birch*
- Red maple
- Red oak*
- Striped maple
- Yellow birch*

Sapling/shrub

- Mountain maple*
- Striped maple*
- Yellow birch*

Dwarf Shrub

- Lowbush blueberry
- Poison-ivy

Herb

- Big-leaved aster
- Common hairgrass
- Marginal woodfern
- Rock polypody
- Wild sarsaparilla

Bryoid

- Dicranum moss
- Large hair-cap moss
- Pincushion moss

Associated Rare Plants

- Purple clematis

Examples on Conservation Lands You Can Visit

- Acadia National Park – Hancock Co.
- Caribou Mountain, Donnell Pond Public Lands – Hancock Co.
- Horse Mountain, Baxter State Park – Penobscot Co.
- Little Kineo Mountain Public Lands –Piscataquis Co.