

Grassy Shrub Marsh

State Rank S5

Community Description

This is a heterogeneous wetland type in which herbs and shrubs occur in various assemblages and proportions. Many examples are transitional to other open wetland types. A variant in southern Maine has buttonbush as a prominent shrub. The more typical expression is dominated by herbs, with a mixture of graminoids making up at least 50% of the cover, often with a sparse shrub layer containing meadowsweet or hardhack. Bluejoint is frequent, but not in large swards. Any of a variety of graminoids may be prominent at different sites. Three-way sedge and yellow loosestrife are indicators. Bryophytes are generally minor. This type is very broadly defined and could be subdivided into shrub versus herbaceous types using additional site data and analyses.

Soil and Site Characteristics

Sites are typically on mineral soils that are flooded early in the growing season and remain saturated (or occasionally flooded) throughout the season. Soil pH is typically 5.0-6.0. Beaver activity often affects these wetlands, and can cause dramatic (although sometimes temporary) changes in dominance.

Diagnostics

Wetland herb and shrub species are mixed (herbs 25-95%, shrubs 0-70% cover), without a dominance of tussock sedge, bluejoint, or alder. Sites occur on mineral soil, but may have a thick organic layer of muck. Red maple may be occasional in sapling form. Mountain holly, dogwoods, or alder are often dominant shrubs; sweetgale and leatherleaf are frequent but usually total less than 50% cover.

Similar Types

Sweetgale Mixed Shrub Fens are similar, but occur on organic soils and have plants more characteristic of peatlands, such as rhodora, sheep laurel, Labrador tea, bog rosemary, or pitcher plants. Those plants may be present in this type, but form <1% cover. Tussock Sedge

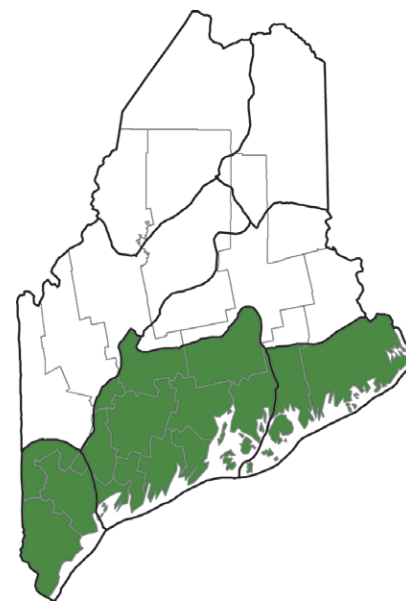
Meadows and Bluejoint Meadows are strongly dominated by tussock sedge and bluejoint, respectively. Alder Shrub Thickets have >20% cover of alder or alder mixed with gray birch. Three-way Sedge - Goldenrod Outwash Plain Pondshores share diagnostic species but occur on sandy shores and contain other characteristic species.

Conservation, Wildlife, and Management Considerations

These marshes are well distributed throughout Maine and well represented on public lands and private conservation lands. Maintaining appropriate wetland buffers can help ensure that adjacent land uses do not degrade the marshes.

Several rare reptiles may be found in this community type. The ribbon snake seeks out prey in these wetlands. In Southern Maine, spotted turtles and Blanding's turtles may overwinter in marshes where water levels remain

Location Map



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



Mixed Graminoid Shrub Marsh

reliably deep throughout most years. Some occurrences may function as vernal pools, which provide important breeding habitat for a variety of amphibians including wood frogs, spotted salamanders, and blue-spotted salamanders. These wetlands provide nesting and foraging habitat for a number of wading birds including the green heron, American bittern, and the rare least bittern. The rare sedge wren nests in graminoid marshes and wet meadows.

Distribution

Statewide, extending southward, westward, and into Canada.

Landscape Pattern: Small to Large Patch

Examples on Conservation Lands You Can Visit

- Kennebec Crossing, Appalachian Trail - Somerset Co.
- Mt Agamenticus - York Co.
- Stratton Brook Pond, Bigelow Preserve - Franklin Co.
- Tunk Lake Area, Donnell Pond Public Lands - Hancock Co.

Characteristic Plants

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

Sapling/shrub

Bog willow*
 Buttonbush*
 Meadowsweet*
 Mountain holly
 Red osier dogwood*
 Speckled alder*
 Sweetgale*
 Winterberry

Dwarf Shrub

Leatherleaf*
 Sweetgale*

Herb

Beaked sedge*
 Black bulrush*
 Bluejoint*
 Expanded bulrush*
 Few-seeded sedge*
 Marsh St. Johnswort*
 Royal fern*
 Sensitive fern*
 Three-way sedge*
 Wool-grass*
 Yellow loosestrife*

Bryoid

Sphagnum mosses*

Associated Rare Plants

Comb-leaved mermaid-weed
 Featherfoil
 Hollow joe-pye weed
 Red-root flatsedge
 Tall beak-rush

Associated Rare Animals

Black-crowned night-heron
 Blanding's turtle
 Least bittern
 Ribbon snake
 Sedge wren
 Short-eared owl
 Spotted turtle