

Mixed Saltmarsh

State Rank *S3*

Community Description

These saltmarshes contain a mixture of graminoids and forbs, sometimes with patches of saltmarsh cordgrasses, but saltmeadow cordgrass is not strongly dominant. Chair-maker's rush is almost always present, at least in small amounts. Dominants can vary, but indicator species include creeping bentgrass, freshwater cordgrass, sea lavender, wire rush, saltmarsh bulrush, New England aster, saltmarsh sedge, and narrow-leaved cattail. Sweetgrass is often present, though not abundant. The vegetation occurs as a mosaic of dominants and lacks the strong zonation typical of the larger *Spartina* Saltmarshes.

Soil and Site Characteristics

These are often fringe marshes in sheltered coastal pockets, estuaries, and tidal creeks; not typically covering large acreages although they may be strung along a fairly long stretch of shoreline. They often occur along tidal creeks, or as a shoreline fringe in coves. Vegetation consists predominantly of low marsh species (saltmarsh regularly inundated twice daily by tides).

Diagnostics

These are tidal marshes in which various saltmarsh plants share dominance with

cordgrasses and/or black-grass; chair-maker's rush is typically present and may be dominant; saltmarsh sedge is also characteristic. Vegetation tends to be patchy rather than zoned.

Similar Types

Spartina Saltmarshes have many of the same species, but have much greater relative cover of saltmeadow cordgrass, smooth cordgrass, and black-grass. They also appear more uniform, and tend to occur at the outer reaches of estuaries (back-barrier marshes and finger marshes). Brackish Tidal Marshes also share many species, but lack the saltmarsh cordgrasses and other strictly saltmarsh species (black-grass, saltmarsh bulrush, saltmarsh false-foxglove, sea lavender, etc.).



Mixed Graminoid - Forb Saltmarsh

Conservation, Wildlife, and Management Considerations

Saltmarshes have received considerable conservation attention. Many occur on public lands or private conservation lands, only a few of which are listed. With development of the uplands that border these marshes, maintenance of appropriate wetland buffers can help reduce degradation that could result from adjacent land uses.

Saltmarshes are important nesting habitat for Nelson's sharp-tailed sparrow, seaside sparrow, and the rare saltmarsh sharp-tailed sparrow. These wetlands also provide foraging habitat for a large number of wading birds and shorebirds, including the rare least tern. The big bluet, a rare damselfly, inhabits saltmarsh ponds with emergent vegetation in southern Maine.

Distribution

Coastwide; almost all of the east coastal Maine saltmarshes contain this type. Extends eastward into the Canadian Maritimes (Laurentian Mixed Forest Province) and westward into New Hampshire and Massachusetts.

Landscape Pattern: Small Patch

Characteristic Plants

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

Herb

- Alkali bulrush*
- Black-grass*
- Chaffy sedge*
- Chair-maker's rush*
- Common arrow-grass
- Creeping bentgrass*
- Freshwater cordgrass
- New York aster*
- Salt-loving spikerush*
- Saltmeadow cordgrass*
- Wire rush*

Associated Rare Plants

- Gaspé arrow-grass
- Marsh-elder
- Saltmarsh false-foxglove
- Saltmarsh sedge
- Small saltmarsh aster

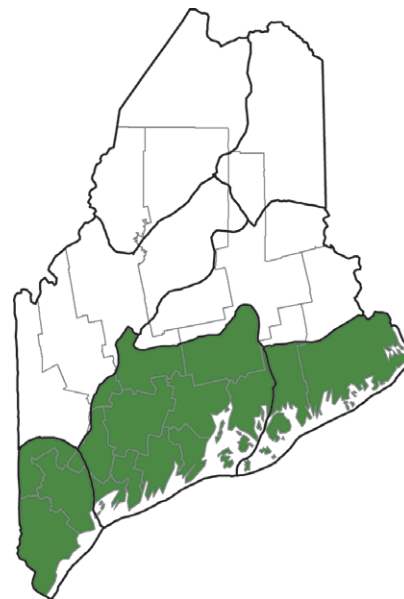
Associated Rare Animals

- Big bluet
- Black-crowned night-heron
- Laughing gull
- Least tern
- Saltmarsh sharp-tailed sparrow
- Short-eared owl

Examples on Conservation Lands You Can Visit

- Cobscook Bay State Park - Washington Co.
- Great Wass Island Preserve - Washington Co.
- Petit Manan National Wildlife Refuge - Hancock Co.
- Reid State Park - Sagadahoc Co.
- Scarborough Marsh Wildlife Management Area - Cumberland Co.

Location Map



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



Saltmarsh Bulrush