

Downeast Maritime Shrubland

State Rank S2

Community Description

Mat forming vegetation occurs on exposed maritime headlands. Most of the cover is dwarf heath shrubs and black crowberry growing only a few inches tall, punctuated by islands of taller shrubs such as bayberry or small spruce. Crowberry may carpet large areas. Creeping juniper or the more upright common juniper are often present. In the herb layer, three-toothed cinquefoil is characteristic. The bryoid layer is minor, but may feature reindeer lichens.

Soil and Site Characteristics

Sites occur on extremely exposed, usually granitic headlands. Sites may contain pockets of peaty soil developing in rock hollows. Salt spray, fog, and wind are near constant elements.

Diagnostics

Sites are characterized by the presence (and often dominance) of black crowberry, forming mats of vegetation with three-toothed cinquefoil and other species on exposed rocky coastal headlands.

Similar Types

Rose - Bayberry Maritime Shrublands occur in similar settings, but are dominated by taller shrubs without a strong component of mat-forming shrubs. Seaside Goldenrod - Goosetongue Open Headlands share many species and often co-occur

with Crowberry - Bayberry Headlands, but the former are much more sparsely vegetated (vegetation often covers <25% of the rock surface overall), and without extensive mats of dwarf shrub vegetation.

Conservation, Wildlife, and Management Considerations

Several known occurrences are on public or private conservation lands. While this protects them from conversion to other uses, it also increases the opportunity for foot traffic. Because the vegetation is so low to the ground, it is easily trampled and some sites have been degraded. The primary management consideration is



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to keep visitors on established trails as much as possible.

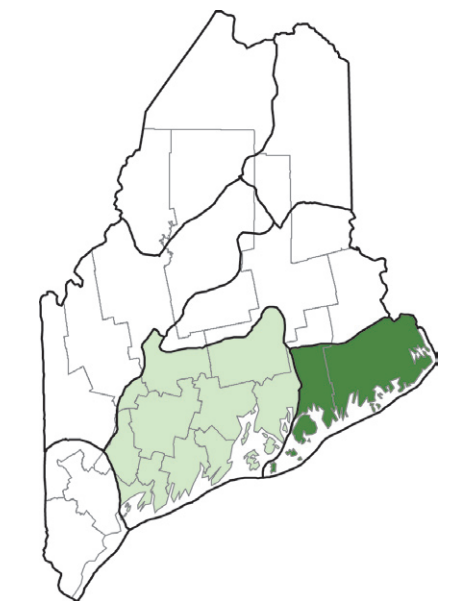
Rocky headland communities, especially those that occur on uninhabited islands, may provide nesting habitat for some pelagic bird species, such as the Atlantic puffin, razorbill, and Leach's storm petrel. Coastal breeders such as the common eider, American black duck, herring and great black-backed gulls, and Atlantic puffin may also use this habitat in appropriate settings. The crowberry blue butterfly is restricted to coastal heaths in east-coastal Maine. It is typically found in peatlands, where it uses black crowberry as a larval host plant, but could occur in this community as well.

Distribution

Coastal Maine (often on islands) from Mount Desert Island eastward; extending into the Canadian Maritimes (Laurentian Mixed Forest Province).

Landscape Pattern: Small Patch

Location Map



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



Characteristic Plants

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

Dwarf Shrub

Black crowberry*
 Creeping juniper
 Large cranberry*
 Lowbush blueberry*
 Mountain cranberry
 Swamp dewberry*

Herb

Bluebell
 Canada mayflower
 Red fescue
 Three-toothed cinquefoil

Bryoid

Reindeer lichen

Associated Rare Plants

Nova Scotia false-foxglove

Associated Rare Animals

Crowberry blue

Examples on Conservation Lands You Can Visit

- Cutler Public Lands – Washington Co.
- Little Bois Bubert Island, Petit Manan National Wildlife Refuge – Washington Co.
- Mistake Island Preserve – Washington Co.
- Schoodic Peninsula, Acadia National Park – Hancock Co.
- West Quoddy Head State Park – Washington Co.