



Photo: Stewart DesMeules

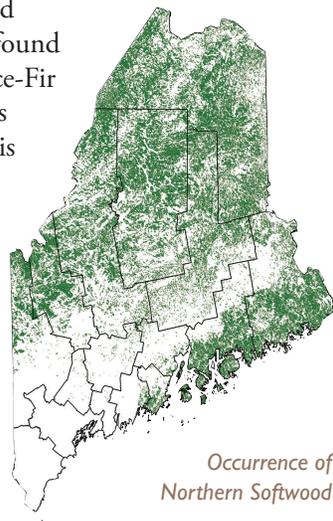
# Northern Softwood Association

- SPRUCE-FIR
- NORTHERN WHITE PINE-MIXED CONIFER
- SPRUCE-HEMLOCK
- NORTHERN WHITE CEDAR
- ASPEN-BIRCH (EARLY SUCCESSIONAL)

**IDENTIFICATION** Softwood species comprise at least 75% of the stocking. Spruce-Fir is the most common forest type within this association. Northern Softwoods are typically characterized by mixtures of red spruce, white spruce, or black spruce and balsam fir in pure stands or with other species. Common associates include yellow birch, paper birch, and other northern hardwood species as well as hemlock, northern white cedar, and white pine. This association currently covers close to 6 million acres in Maine.

**ECOLOGY** Spruce-Fir and other Northern Softwood forest types frequently share the same landscape as Northern Hardwoods, but are found on cooler sites— notably valley bottoms, high-elevation areas, and along the coast—or where soils are somewhat poorly to poorly drained. Stands dominated by white spruce are common on former agricultural land in northern and eastern Maine as well as in the spray zone on coastal islands.

**WILDLIFE** Several bird species—including Spruce Grouse, Gray Jay, Black-backed Woodpecker, and Bay-breasted, Magnolia and Cape May Warblers—are found almost exclusively in Spruce-Fir forests. American marten is strongly associated with this forest type, either in pure stands or in Mixed Hardwood Spruce-Fir forests. Younger Spruce-Fir is critical for snowshoe hare, the primary prey of Canada lynx. Relatively mature to mature stands are critical deer wintering areas in northern Maine (See Table).



Occurrence of Northern Softwood

## Selected Northern Softwood Habitat Association Species

FFMB PRIORITY SPECIES	KEY HABITAT FEATURES
Bay-breasted Warbler	Dense conifers
Blackburnian Warbler	Tall trees, large hemlocks
Black-backed Woodpecker	Large dead/dying trees
Boreal Chickadee	Snags
Magnolia Warbler	Dense conifer understory regeneration
Northern Parula	Moist forest, bearded lichen
Olive-sided Flycatcher	Gaps and snags
OTHER WILDLIFE SPECIES	KEY HABITAT FEATURES
American Three-toed Woodpecker	Large decaying trees, black spruce stands
Cape May Warbler	Tall stands of spruce, budworm specialist
Spruce Grouse	Dense conifers with low branches
White-throated Sparrow	Open forest with brushy clearings
Merlin	Open forest, old crow nests or cavities
American Marten	Hollow trees and logs, dense regenerating softwoods
Northern Flying Squirrel	Cavity trees
Snowshoe Hare	Dense hardwood or softwood regeneration
Moose	Wetlands
White-tailed Deer	Adequate winter browse, conifer cover to reduce snowpack