



Photo: Rob Bryan

Northern Hardwood Association

- **NORTHERN HARDWOODS**
(BEECH-BIRCH-MAPLE AND VARIANTS)
- **ASPEN-BIRCH**

IDENTIFICATION Hardwood species comprise at least 75% of the stocking, with sugar maple, yellow birch, and American beech as characteristic species and paper birch, aspen, red oak, hemlock, and red spruce as common associates. Beech and red maple may be dominant on poor sites, while sugar maple, ash, and basswood are found on highly enriched sites. Young forest stages may be dominated by aspen (popple) and paper birch. This association currently covers approximately 7 million acres in Maine.

ECOLOGY Northern hardwood forests are typically found at middle elevations on moist, medium- to well-drained sites. Over time, late-successional stages of this type form large, relatively stable forests. Under natural conditions, shade-tolerant northern hardwoods are most commonly regenerated in small canopy gaps created by windthrow or mortality caused by insects and disease. This association is known for an abundance of spring wildflowers. There is often a transition to spruce-fir at high elevations, along drainages, and in less well-drained soils.

WILDLIFE Northern Hardwoods host a great variety of resident and migratory birds and other wildlife (See Table). The *hard mast*, or tree nuts, produced by beech and oak are an important food source for many wildlife species, though trees do not start producing large amounts of mast before age 40. Beechnuts are critical to the reproductive success of black bear in northern Maine.



Selected Northern Hardwood Habitat Association Species

FFMB PRIORITY SPECIES	KEY HABITAT FEATURES
Black-throated Blue Warbler	Dense understory of hobble-bush or other shrubby species
Chestnut-sided Warbler	Gaps with regeneration
Mourning Warbler	Dense regeneration
Ovenbird	Mature forest, abundant leaf litter, little ground cover
Scarlet Tanager	Forest interior, tall trees (especially oaks), closed canopy
Veery	Sapling patches and riparian areas
Wood Thrush	Tall trees, dense leaf litter
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	Snags, especially Aspen-Birch
SELECTED WILDLIFE SPECIES	KEY HABITAT FEATURES
Barred Owl	Large cavity trees
Broad-winged Hawk	Small gaps
Northern Goshawk	Mature trees
Pileated Woodpecker	Large decaying trees or snags
Rose-breasted Grosbeak	Dense hardwood thickets/sapling stands
Black Bear	Hard mast, especially beechnuts
Fisher	Hollow trees and logs, dense regenerating softwoods
Mink	Hollow logs, natural cavities, riparian areas
Porcupine	Larger den trees