

# Northern Wet Forest

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**Northern Wet Forest, as described by Curtis (1959), has been split into two natural communities: Black Spruce Swamp and Northern Tamarack Swamp. For details, see the descriptions of those natural communities in this chapter.**

Northern Wet Forest applies to all conifer swamps that occur on a substrate of acid sphagnum peat, at least partially isolating the plant community from contact with mineral-enriched ground water. Black spruce (*Picea mariana*) and tamarack (*Larix laricina*) are the dominant trees. Jack pine (*Pinus banksiana*) is an important canopy component at a few locations, but other tree species tend to be incidental and/or are short lived. The depauperate flora is composed of a limited but specialized group, made up mostly of sphagnum mosses, sedges, and ericaceous shrubs.

Representative shrubs, all of them in the heath family (the Ericaceae), include leather-leaf (*Chamaedaphne calyculata*), Labrador-tea (*Ledum groenlandicum*), bog-laurel (*Kalmia polifolia*), bog-rosemary (*Andromeda glaucophylla*), creeping-snowberry (*Gaultheria hispidula*), and small cranberry (*Vaccinium oxycoccos*).

The Natural Heritage Inventory has split out two entities from Northern Wet Forest, identified but not solely defined by the two dominant conifer species: Black Spruce

Swamp and Northern Tamarack Swamp (Tamarack “Poor” Swamp). Water chemistry and associated understory species are among the other important factors considered in the decision to make this split. Both Black Spruce Swamp and Northern Tamarack Swamp are acid peatland communities in which tree cover is relatively high (generally >50%). They are most closely related to Open Bog, Muskeg, and Poor Fen, and either or both of these coniferous wetlands may occur in complexes of other peatland communities.

Older Natural Heritage Inventory data on natural communities treated all occurrences of acid conifer swamps (and some semi-open acid conifer swamps) as “Northern Wet Forest.” Eventually each of these older occurrences will be reclassified. Until that task has been completed, we will continue to provide this broad description of the type.

**Also see:**

Curtis (1959)  
Harris et al. (1996)

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For a list of terms used, please visit the [Glossary](#).

For a reference list, please see the [Literature Cited](#).