

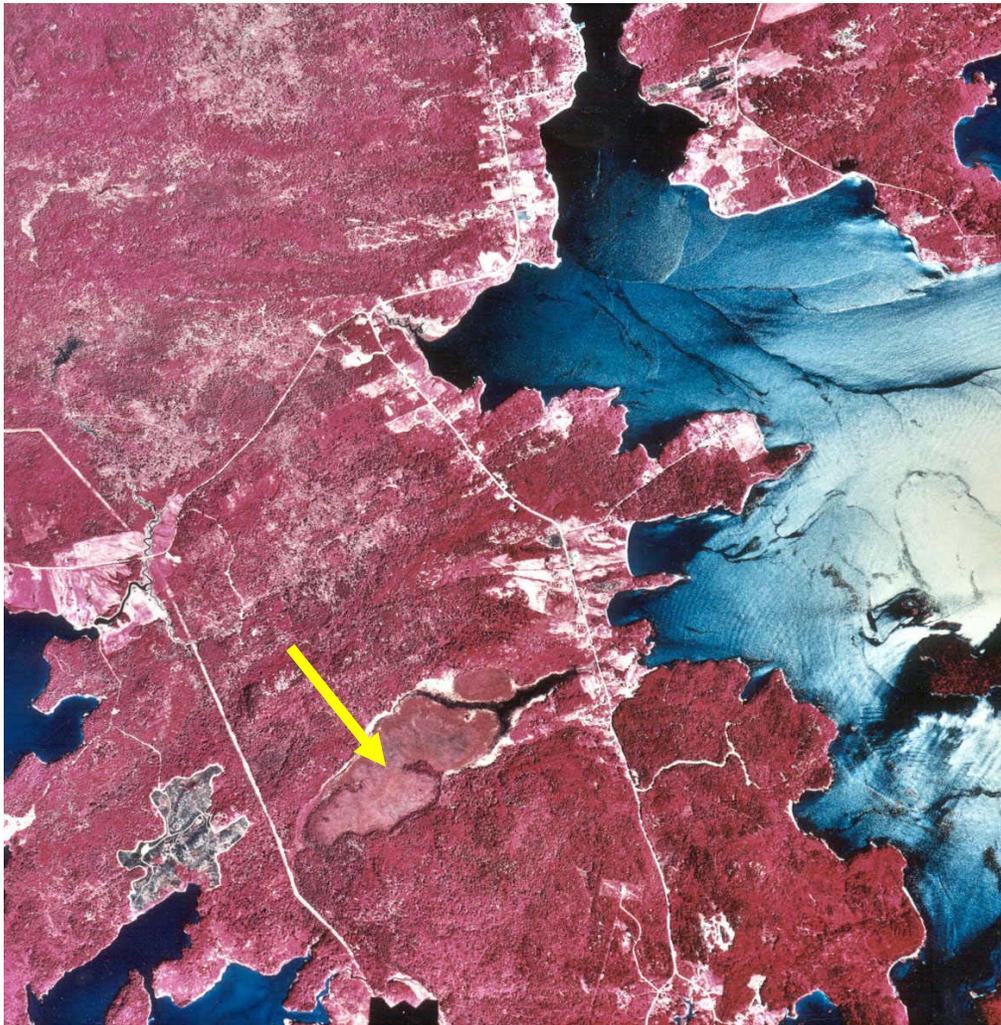
Larrabee Heath

Machiasport

Description:

Larrabee Heath is a large (~235 acre), undisturbed, coastal plateau bog with steep marginal slopes on its north and south sides. Habitat zonation is well developed in this confined plateau bog. The Heath occupies an elongated valley and has stream flow confined to its north and south margins, where “marginal streams” (i.e., at the margin of the bog) abut upland slopes. Lateral expansion of the raised plateau has restricted these streams into narrowly meandering lags (wet depressions). There is significant beaver activity below the confluence of the two streams. The combination of confined marginal streams and beaver ponding is commonly associated with inland raised bog systems, but is rare in coastal bog systems.

At varying distances from the marginal streams the gentle peat slope abruptly rises 3-6 feet. This raised plateau, which is dominated by dwarf shrub heath vegetation, constitutes the predominant vegetation community at Larrabee Heath—occupying approximately half of the wetland acreage. The most abundant shrubs here include sheep laurel (*Kalmia anugstifolia*), leatherleaf (*Chamaedaphne calyculata*), mountain holly (*Nemopanthus mucronata*), and black



Color infra-red air photo of Larrabee Heath, 1991

crowberry (*Empetrum nigrum*). Peat moss is ubiquitous with increasing amounts of *Sphagnum fuscum* at higher elevations on the plateau. Several acres of forested bog dominated by stunted black spruce (*Picea mariana*) are also present.

At the eastern end, beyond the confluence of the two lagg streams, Larrabee Heath is dominated by wet meadows that have been flooded by recent beaver activity. Grasses and sedges, especially bluejoint grass (*Calamagrostis canadensis*) and tussock sedge (*Carex stricta*), dominate the wet stream/pond margins while alder shrubs predominate in areas at greater distances from the stream.

The surrounding upland areas are spruce-fir forests dominated by red spruce (*Picea rubens*), balsam fir (*Abies balsamea*), and paper birch (*Betula papyrifera*) with signs of historic selective cutting and damage from spruce budworm. The age of the surrounding forests is approximately 70 to 100 years. Larrabee Heath and the surrounding uplands may have experienced a fire around the turn of the century.

Rare Species and Exemplary Natural Community Table for Larrabee Heath

Common Name	Latin Name	S-RANK	G-RANK	State Status
<i>Exemplary Natural Communities</i>				
Coastal Plateau Bog Ecosystem		S3	N/A	N/A

Other Habitats Mapped by MDIFW:

Waterfowl / Wading Bird Habitat

Conservation Considerations:

- In general, threats to peatlands include peat mining, cranberry harvesting, timber harvest around the forested perimeters, and development. Most of these threats have been abated by Nature Conservancy protection of the bog.
- Continued beaver activity may alter the vegetation of the wetland from peatland flora (e.g., ericaceous shrubs, peat mosses) to more minerotrophic vegetation (i.e., plants adapted to mucky shores, such as blue-joint grass.) Monitoring through air photos and field plots would help to clarify the continuing impacts of beavers.
- Invasive plant species such as common reed (*Phragmites australis*) and purple loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*) may pose future threats to this wetland.

Protection Status:

Approximately 80% of the coastal plateau bog lies within a 427-acre parcel owned by The Nature Conservancy.