Macrogroup: Large River Floodplain

Description:
A complex of wetland and upland vegetation on floodplains along larger rivers, where temporary to seasonal flooding affects vegetation composition and dynamics. Vegetation includes both non-forested bar and scour communities and a diverse group of more extensive forests. Microtopographic heterogeneity is high, and forests tend to be differentiated by depositional landforms such as levees, sloughs, terraces, and abandoned channels. Better drained soils may support wet site oaks, shagbark hickory, and sweetgum. Wettest swamps are often dominated by green ash and red maple. Bald cypress may occur, but does not dominate. Understories are generally open, with sedges and grasses or moisture-loving forbs in the herb layer.

Ecological Setting and Natural Processes:
Occurs along large rivers or streams where topography and alluvial processes have resulted in a well-developed floodplain. River gradients tend to be a bit higher in the Piedmont than on the blackwater and brownwater rivers in the coastal plain. The alluvial soils are variable in texture. High-energy flooding can rework bar and bank communities, while windthrow dominates canopy dynamics.

Similar Habitat Types:
Like other floodplain types in the Northeast, long linear examples of this habitat in good condition are rare because of their rich alluvial soils, settings favorable to agriculture, and vulnerability to invasive plants. Similar in structure to floodplains in higher valleys to the west, but with a somewhat different suite of bottomland species.

Crosswalk to State Name Examples:
Coastal Plain - Piedmont Bottomland Forest (MD), Coastal Plain / Piedmont Floodplain Swamp (VA)

Crosswalk to State Wildlife Action Plans:
Wetland Habitat - Forested (VA)
Places to Visit this Habitat:
C & O Canal National Historical Park | MD
Mckee Beshers Wildlife Management Area | MD
Chub Sandhill State Natural Area Preserve | VA
Cumberland State Forest | VA
Powhatan State Park | VA

Associated Species:  Appendix lists scientific names
HERPTILES:  dwarf waterdog (Necturus punctatus)

PLANTS:  American elm (Ulmus americana), black walnut (Juglans nigra), boxelder, Canada waterleaf (Hydrophyllum canadense), clear-weed (Pilea pumila), hackberry (Celtis occidentalis), large solomon’s-seal (Polygonatum biflorum), miami-mist (Phacelia purshii), paw-paw (Asimina triloba), ravenfoot sedge (Carex crus-corvi) spicebush (Lindera benzoin), striped violet (Viola striata), sweet-shrub (Calycanthus floridus), sycamore (Platanus occidentalis), Virginia bluebells (Mertensia virginica), white snakeroot (Ageratina altissima), wild blue phlox (Phlox divaricata), wood-nettle (Laportea canadensis), yellow trout-lily (Erythronium americanum)

Species of Concern (G1-G4):  Appendix lists scientific names
HERPTILES:  dwarf waterdog (Necturus punctatus)

INSECTS:  numerous rare mussels: atlantic pigtoe (fusconaia masoni), roanoke slabshell (elliptio roanokensis), spine-crowned clubtail (gommus abbreviatus), yellow lampmussel (lampsis cariosa), yellow lance (elliptio lanceolata)

PLANTS:  Baldwin’s spikerush (Eleocharis baldwinii), bog rush (Juncus elliotii), large marsh st. john’s-wort (Triadenum tubulosum), reclining bulrush (Scirpus flaccidifolius)

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Appendix lists scientific names

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