



BioMap2

CONSERVING THE BIODIVERSITY OF
MASSACHUSETTS IN A CHANGING WORLD

Belmont

Produced in 2012

This report and associated map provide information about important sites for biodiversity conservation in your area.

This information is intended for conservation planning, and is not intended for use in state regulations.





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Introduction

The Massachusetts Department of Fish & Game, through the Division of Fisheries and Wildlife's Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program (NHESP), and The Nature Conservancy's Massachusetts Program developed *BioMap2* to protect the state's biodiversity in the context of climate change.

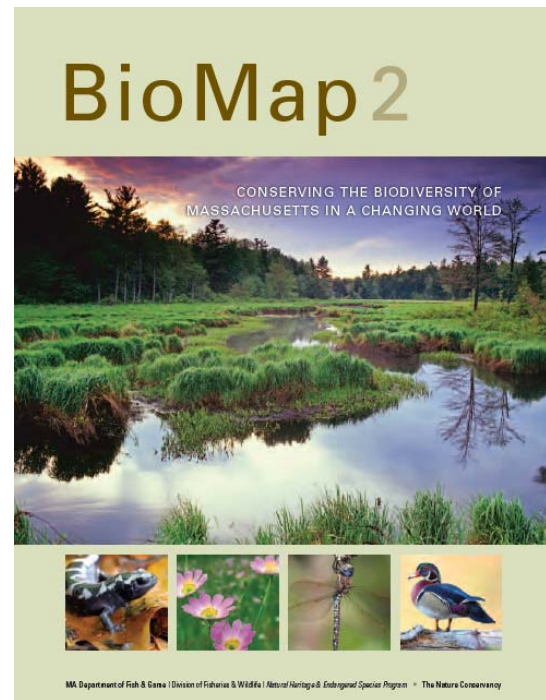
BioMap2 combines NHESP's 30 years of rigorously documented rare species and natural community data with spatial data identifying wildlife species and habitats that were the focus of the Division of Fisheries and Wildlife's 2005 State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP). *BioMap2* also integrates The Nature Conservancy's assessment of large, well-connected, and intact ecosystems and landscapes across the Commonwealth, incorporating concepts of ecosystem resilience to address anticipated climate change impacts.

Protection and stewardship of *BioMap2* Core Habitat and Critical Natural Landscape is essential to safeguard the diversity of species and their habitats, intact ecosystems, and resilient natural landscapes across Massachusetts.

What Does Status Mean?

The Division of Fisheries and Wildlife determines a status category for each rare species listed under the Massachusetts Endangered Species Act, M.G.L. c.131A, and its implementing regulations 321 CMR 10.00. Rare species are categorized as Endangered, Threatened or of Special Concern according to the following:

- Endangered species are in danger of extinction throughout all or a significant portion of their range or are in danger of extirpation from Massachusetts.



Get your copy of the *BioMap2* report! Download from www.mass.gov/nhesp or contact Natural Heritage at 508-389-6360 or natural.heritage@state.ma.us.

- Threatened species are likely to become Endangered in Massachusetts in the foreseeable future throughout all or a significant portion of their range.
- Special Concern species have suffered a decline that could threaten the species if allowed to continue unchecked or occur in such small numbers or with such restricted distribution or specialized habitat requirements that they could easily become Threatened in Massachusetts.

In addition NHESP maintains an unofficial watch list of plants that are tracked due to potential conservation interest or concern, but are not regulated under the Massachusetts Endangered Species Act or other laws or regulations. Likewise, described natural communities are not regulated by any law or regulations, but they can help to identify





ecologically important areas that are worthy of protection. The status of natural communities reflects the documented number and acreages of each community type in the state:

- Critically Imperiled communities typically have 5 or fewer documented sites or have very few remaining acres in the state.
- Imperiled communities typically have 6-20 sites or few remaining acres in the state.
- Vulnerable communities typically have 21-100 sites or limited acreage across the state.
- Secure communities typically have over 100 sites or abundant acreage across the state; however, excellent examples are identified as Core Habitats to ensure continued protection.

In 2005 the Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife completed a comprehensive State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP) documenting the status of Massachusetts wildlife and providing recommendations to help guide wildlife conservation decision-making. SWAP includes all the wildlife species listed under the Massachusetts Endangered Species Act (MESA), as well as more than 80 species that need conservation attention but do not meet the requirements for inclusion under MESA. The SWAP document is organized around habitat types in need of conservation within the Commonwealth. While the original BioMap focused primarily on rare species protected under MESA, *BioMap2* also addresses other Species of Conservation Concern, their habitats, and the ecosystems that support them to create a spatial representation of most of the elements of SWAP.

***BioMap2*: One Plan, Two Components**

BioMap2 identifies two complementary spatial layers, Core Habitat and Critical Natural Landscape.

Core Habitat identifies key areas that are critical for the long-term persistence of rare species and other Species of Conservation Concern, as well as a wide diversity of natural communities and intact ecosystems across the Commonwealth. Protection of Core Habitats will contribute to the conservation of specific elements of biodiversity.

Critical Natural Landscape identifies large natural Landscape Blocks that are minimally impacted by development. If protected, these areas will provide habitat for wide-ranging native species, support intact ecological processes, maintain connectivity among habitats, and enhance ecological resilience to natural and anthropogenic disturbances in a rapidly changing world. Areas delineated as Critical Natural Landscape also include buffering upland around wetland, coastal, and aquatic Core Habitats to help ensure their long-term integrity.

The long-term persistence of Massachusetts biological resources requires a determined commitment to land and water conservation. Protection and stewardship of both Critical Natural Landscapes and Core Habitats are needed to realize the biodiversity conservation vision of *BioMap2*.

Components of Core Habitat

Core Habitat identifies specific areas necessary to promote the long-term persistence of rare species, other Species of Conservation Concern, exemplary natural communities, and intact ecosystems.

Rare Species

There are 432 native plant and animal species listed as Endangered, Threatened or Special Concern under the Massachusetts Endangered Species Act (MESA) based on their rarity, population trends, and threats to survival. For





Table 1. Species of Conservation Concern described in the State Wildlife Action Plan and/or included on the MESA List and for which habitat was mapped in *BioMap2*. Note that plants are not included in SWAP, and that marine species such as whales and sea turtles are not included in *BioMap2*.

Taxonomic Group	MESA-listed Species	Non-listed Species of Conservation Concern
Mammals	4	5
Birds	27	23
Reptiles	10	5
Amphibians	4	3
Fish	10	17
Invertebrates	102	9
Plants	256	0
Total	413	62

BioMap2, NHESP staff identified the highest quality habitat sites for each non-marine species based on size, condition, and landscape context.

Other Species of Conservation Concern

In addition to species on the MESA List described previously, the State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP) identifies 257 wildlife species and 22 natural habitats most in need of conservation within the Commonwealth. *BioMap2* includes species-specific habitat areas for 45 of these species and habitat for 17 additional species which was mapped with other coarse-filter and fine-filter approaches.

Priority Natural Communities

Natural communities are assemblages of plant and animal species that share a common environment and occur together repeatedly on the landscape. *BioMap2* gives conservation

priority to natural communities with limited distribution and to the best examples of more common types.

Vernal Pools

Vernal pools are small, seasonal wetlands that provide important wildlife habitat, especially for amphibians and invertebrate animals that use them to breed. *BioMap2* identifies the top 5 percent most interconnected clusters of Potential Vernal Pools in the state.

Forest Cores

In *BioMap2*, Core Habitat includes the best examples of large, intact forests that are least impacted by roads and development, providing critical habitat for numerous woodland species. For example, the interior forest habitat defined by Forest Cores supports many bird species sensitive to the impacts of roads and development, such as the Black-throated Green Warbler, and helps maintain ecological processes found only in unfragmented forest patches.

Wetland Cores

BioMap2 used an assessment of Ecological Integrity to identify the least disturbed wetlands in the state within undeveloped landscapes—those with intact buffers and little fragmentation or other stressors associated with development. These wetlands are most likely to support critical wetland functions (i.e., natural hydrologic conditions, diverse plant and animal habitats, etc.) and are most likely to maintain these functions into the future.

Aquatic Cores

To delineate integrated and functional ecosystems for fish species and other aquatic





Species of Conservation Concern, beyond the species and exemplary habitats described above, *BioMap2* identifies intact river corridors within which important physical and ecological processes of the river or stream occur.

Components of Critical Natural Landscape

Critical Natural Landscape identifies intact landscapes in Massachusetts that are better able to support ecological processes and disturbance regimes, and a wide array of species and habitats over long time frames.

Landscape Blocks

BioMap2 identifies the most intact large areas of predominately natural vegetation, consisting of contiguous forests, wetlands, rivers, lakes, and ponds, as well as coastal habitats such as barrier beaches and salt marshes.

Upland Buffers of Wetland and Aquatic Cores

A variety of analyses were used to identify protective upland buffers around wetlands and rivers.

Upland Habitat to Support Coastal Adaptation

BioMap2 identifies undeveloped lands adjacent to and up to one and a half meters above existing salt marshes as Critical Natural Landscapes with high potential to support inland migration of salt marsh and other coastal habitats over the coming century.

The conservation areas identified by *BioMap2* are based on breadth and depth of data, scientific expertise, and understanding of Massachusetts' biodiversity. The numerous sources of information and analyses used to

Legal Protection of Biodiversity

BioMap2 presents a powerful vision of what Massachusetts would look like with full protection of the land most important for supporting the Commonwealth's biodiversity. While *BioMap2* is a planning tool with *no regulatory function*, all state-listed species enjoy legal protection under the [Massachusetts Endangered Species Act \(M.G.L. c.131A\)](#) and its implementing regulations ([321 CMR 10.00](#)). Wetland habitat of state-listed wildlife is also protected under the [Wetlands Protection Act Regulations \(310 CMR 10.00\)](#). The *Natural Heritage Atlas* contains maps of [Priority Habitats and Estimated Habitats](#), which are used, respectively, for regulation under the Massachusetts Endangered Species Act and the Wetlands Protection Act. For more information on rare species regulations, and to view Priority and Estimated Habitat maps, please see the [Regulatory Review](#) page at <http://www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/dfg/dfw/natural-heritage/regulatory-review/>.

***BioMap2* is a conservation planning tool that does not, in any way, supplant the Estimated and Priority Habitat Maps which have regulatory significance. Unless and until the *BioMap2* vision is fully realized, we must continue to protect our most imperiled species and their habitats.**

create Core Habitat and Critical Natural Landscape are complementary, and outline a comprehensive conservation vision for Massachusetts, from rare species to intact landscapes. In total, these robust analyses define a suite of priority lands and waters that, if permanently protected, will support Massachusetts' natural systems for generations to come.





Understanding Core Habitat Summaries

Following the Town Overview, there is a descriptive summary of each Core Habitat and Critical Natural Landscape that occurs in your city or town. These summaries highlight some of the outstanding characteristics of each Core Habitat and Critical Natural Landscape, and will help you learn more about your city or town's biodiversity. You can find out more information about many of these species and natural communities by looking at specific fact sheets at www.mass.gov/nhosp.

Additional Information

For copies of the full *BioMap2* report, the Technical Report, and an [interactive mapping tool](#), visit the [BioMap2 website](#) via the Land Protection and Planning tab at www.mass.gov/nhosp. If you have any questions about this report, or if you need help protecting land for biodiversity in your community, the Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program staff looks forward to working with you.

Contact the Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program

By phone 508-389-6360
By fax 508-389-7890
By email natural.heritage@state.ma.us
By Mail 100 Hartwell Street, Suite 230
West Boylston, MA 01583

The GIS datalayers of *BioMap2* are available for download from MassGIS at www.mass.gov/mgis.





Town Overview

Belmont lies within the Boston Basin Ecoregion, an area defined by a rim of low hills and outlying hilly suburban towns. The basin itself has low rolling topography and numerous urban reservoirs, lakes, and ponds. The flat areas were once tilled, but are now almost exclusively urban and suburban developments. Rare species habitat is centered on the forests around Mass Audubon's Habitat Wildlife Sanctuary.



Belmont at a Glance

- Total Area: 3,017 acres (4.7 square miles)
- Human Population in 2010: 24,729
- Open space protected in perpetuity: 421 acres, or 14.0% percent of total area*
- BioMap2 Core Habitat: 54 acres
- BioMap2 Core Habitat Protected: 39 acres or 72.8%
- BioMap2 Critical Natural Landscape: 0 acres
- BioMap2 Critical Natural Landscape Protected: 0 acres

BioMap2 Components

Core Habitats

- 1 Species of Conservation Concern Core**
 - 1 reptile

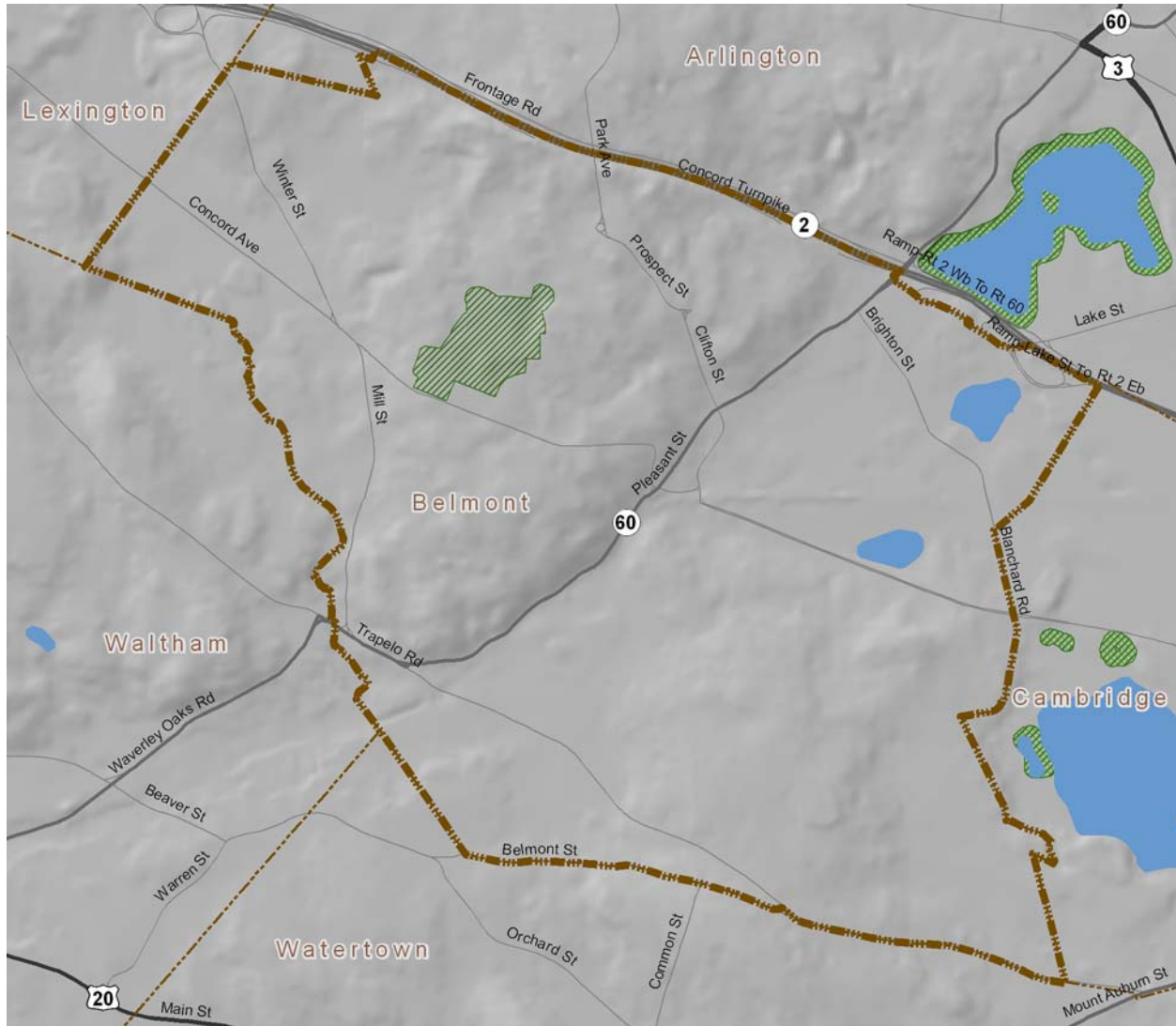
* Calculated using MassGIS data layer "Protected and Recreational Open Space—March, 2012".



** See next pages for complete list of species, natural communities and other biodiversity elements.





BioMap2 Core Habitat and Critical Natural Landscape in Belmont



-  BioMap2 Core Habitat
-  BioMap2 Critical Natural Landscape

1 Mile



**Natural Heritage
& Endangered
Species Program**

Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife
1 Rabbit Hill Road, Westborough, MA 01581
phone: 508-389-6360 fax: 508-389-7890

For more information on rare species and natural communities, please see our fact sheets online at www.mass.gov/nhesp.



**Species of Conservation Concern, Priority and Exemplary Natural Communities,
and Other Elements of Biodiversity in Belmont**

Reptiles

Smooth Green Snake, (*Opheodrys vernalis*), Non-listed SWAP

E = Endangered

T = Threatened

SC = Special Concern

S1 = Critically Imperiled communities, typically 5 or fewer documented sites or very few remaining acres in the state.

S2 = Imperiled communities, typically 6-20 sites or few remaining acres in the state.

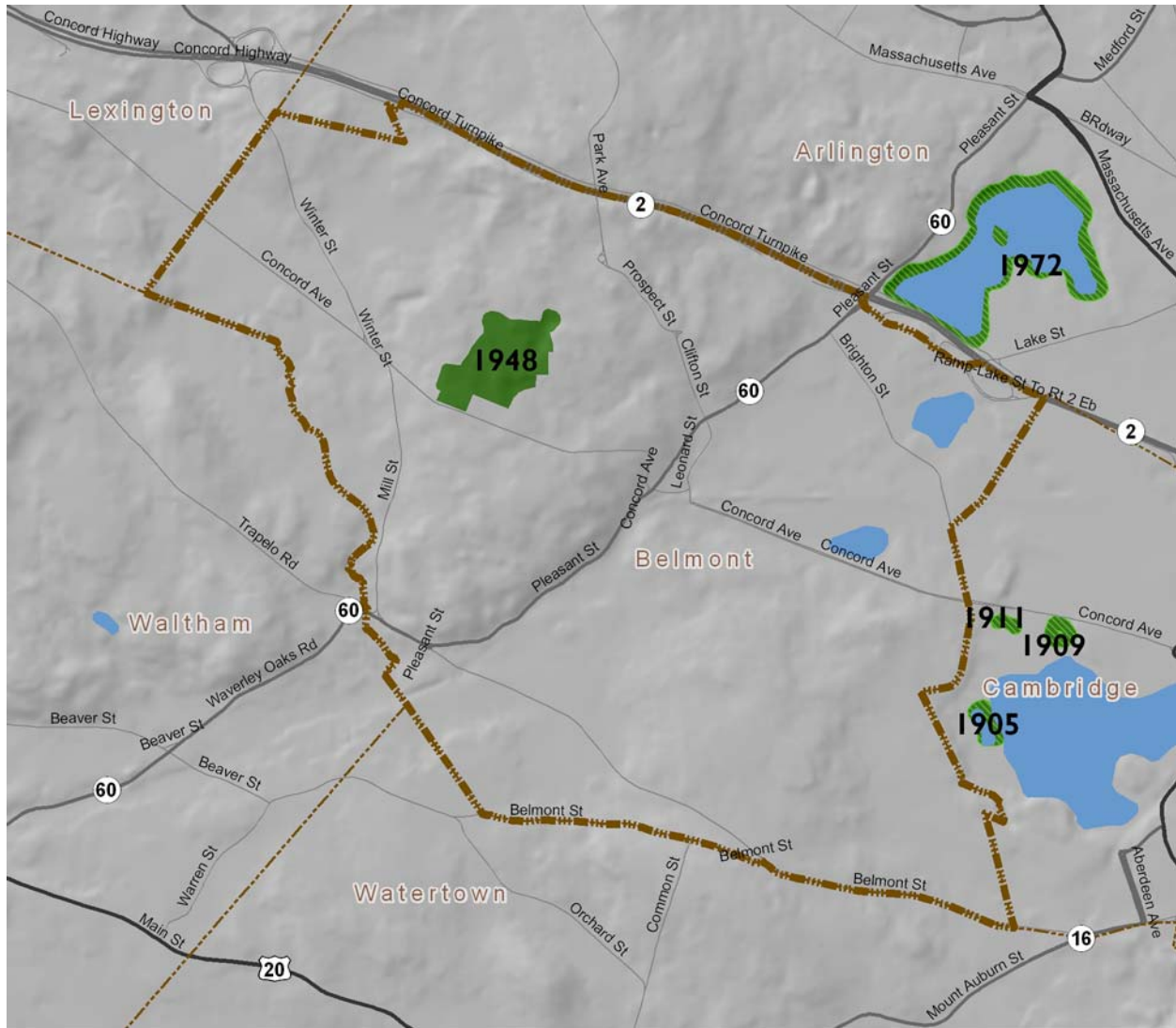
S3 = Vulnerable communities, typically have 21-100 sites or limited acreage across the state.





BioMap2 Core Habitat in Belmont

Core IDs correspond with the following element lists and summaries.



- BioMap2 Core Habitat
- BioMap2 Critical Natural Landscape

1 Mile





Elements of BioMap2 Cores

This section lists all elements of BioMap2 Cores that fall *entirely or partially* within Belmont. The elements listed here may not occur within the bounds of Belmont.

Core 1948

Species of Conservation Concern

Smooth Green Snake

Opheodrys vernalis

Non-listed SWAP





Core Habitat Summaries

Core 1948

A 54-acre Core Habitat featuring a Species of Conservation Concern.

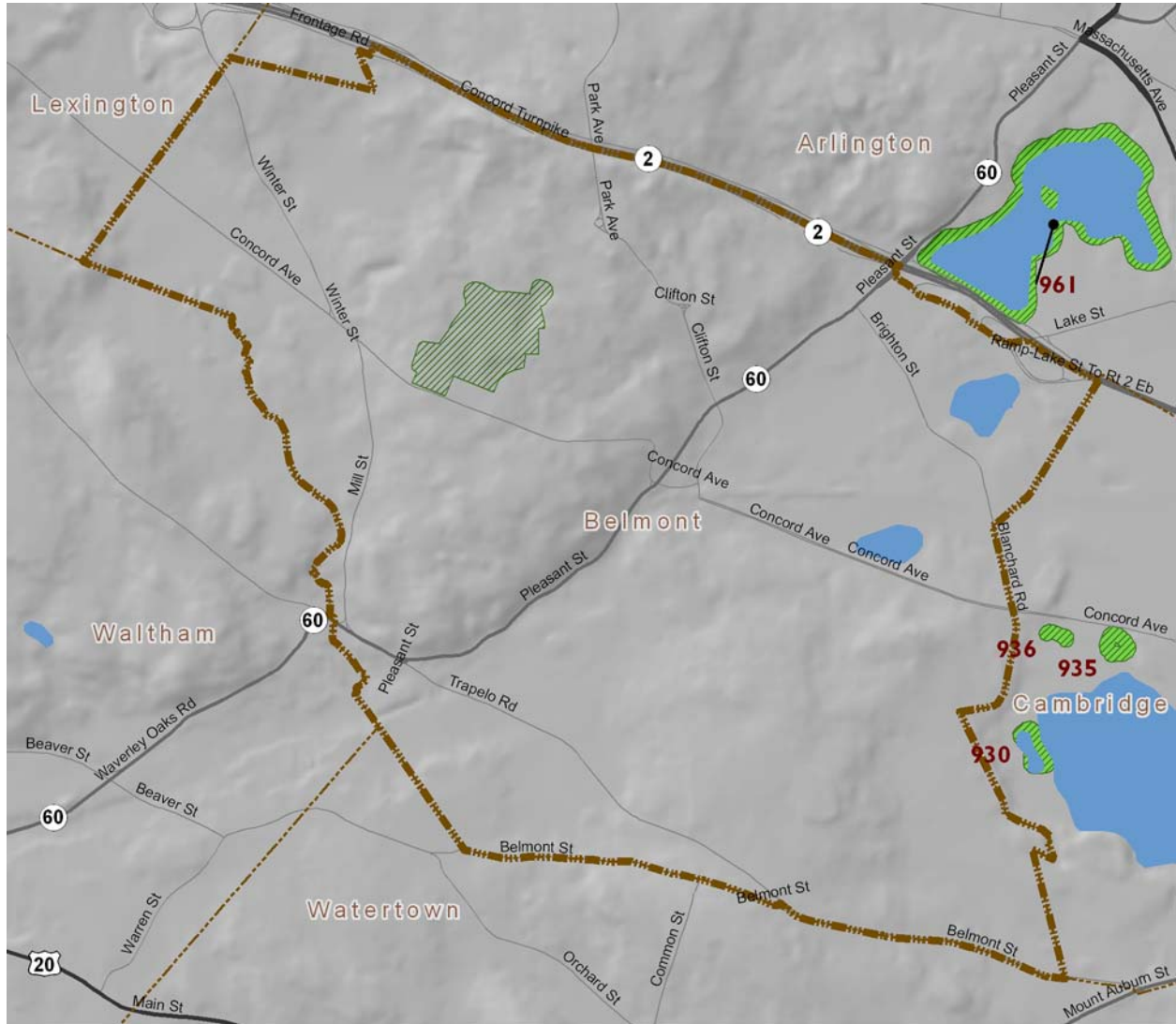
A small to medium-sized snake, adult Smooth Green Snakes are 14-20 inches long with a uniform light green back and yellow to white venter. The Smooth Green Snake is found in moist open or lightly forested habitat where grasses and shrubs are abundant (edges of marshes, wet meadows, fields, and forest edges or open forests, grasslands, blueberry barrens, pine barrens) and prefers to forage on the ground with activity in the daytime. Smooth Green Snake overwinter in rodent burrows, ant mounds and rock crevices, either singly or communally.





BioMap2 Critical Natural Landscape in Belmont

Critical Natural Landscape IDs correspond with the following element lists and summaries.



-  BioMap2 Core Habitat
-  BioMap2 Critical Natural Landscape

1 Mile



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& Endangered
Species Program**

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 1 Rabbit Hill Road, Westborough, MA 01581
 phone: 508-389-6360 fax: 508-389-7890



BioMap2

Conserving the Biodiversity of Massachusetts in a Changing World

Elements of *BioMap2* Critical Natural Landscapes

There are no areas of Critical Natural Landscape in Belmont.



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BioMap2

Conserving the Biodiversity of Massachusetts in a Changing World

Critical Natural Landscape Summaries

There are no areas of Critical Natural Landscape in Belmont.



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Help Save Endangered Wildlife!

Please contribute on your Massachusetts income tax form or directly to the



Natural Heritage &
Endangered Species Fund

To learn more about the Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program and the Commonwealth's rare species, visit our web site at www.mass.gov/nhesp.