



# BioMap2

CONSERVING THE BIODIVERSITY OF  
MASSACHUSETTS IN A CHANGING WORLD

## Blackstone

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.**





## Table of Contents

### Introduction

What is *BioMap2* – Purpose and applications

One plan, two components

Understanding Core Habitat and its components

Understanding Critical Natural Landscape and its components

Understanding Core Habitat and Critical Natural Landscape Summaries

Sources of Additional Information

### Blackstone Overview

### Core Habitat and Critical Natural Landscape Summaries

Elements of *BioMap2* Cores

Core Habitat Summaries

Elements of *BioMap2* Critical Natural Landscapes

Critical Natural Landscape Summaries





## 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.

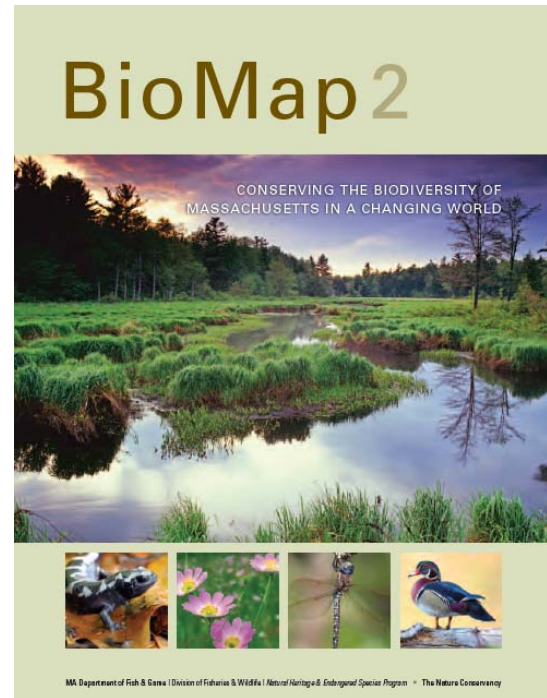
*BioMap2* combines NHESP's 30 years of rigorously documented rare species and natural community data with spatial data identifying wildlife species and habitats that were the focus of the Division of Fisheries and Wildlife's 2005 State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP). *BioMap2* also integrates The Nature 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 (MESA), 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](http://www.mass.gov/nhesp) or contact Natural Heritage at 508-389-6360 or [natural.heritage@state.ma.us](mailto: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 good sites or have very few remaining acres in the state.
- Imperiled communities typically have 6-20 good sites or few remaining acres in the state.
- Vulnerable communities typically have 21-100 good 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 Habitat 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
<b>Total</b>	<b>413</b>	<b>62</b>

*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/nhesp](http://www.mass.gov/nhesp).

## 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/nhesp](http://www.mass.gov/nhesp). 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](mailto:natural.heritage@state.ma.us)  
By Mail 100 Hartwell Street, Suite 230  
West Boylston, MA 01583

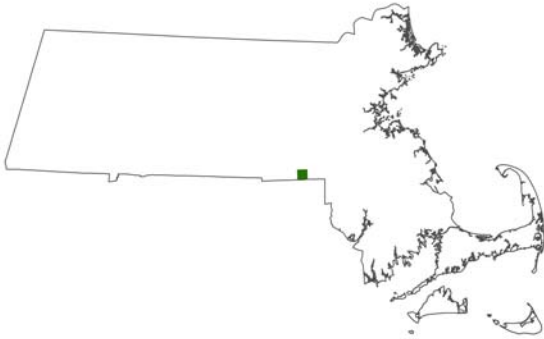
The GIS datalayers of *BioMap2* are available for download from MassGIS at [www.mass.gov/mgis](http://www.mass.gov/mgis).





## Town Overview

Blackstone lies within the Southern New England Coastal Plains and Hills Ecoregion, an area comprised of plains with a few low hills. Forests are mainly central hardwoods with some transition hardwoods and some elm-ash-red maple and red and white pine. Many major rivers drain this area.



### Blackstone at a Glance

- Total Area: 7,283 acres (11.4 square miles)
- Human Population in 2010: 9,026
- Open space protected in perpetuity: 464 acres, or 6.4% percent of total area\*
- BioMap2 Core Habitat: 1,005 acres
- BioMap2 Core Habitat Protected: 235 acres or 23.4%
- BioMap2 Critical Natural Landscape: 1,878 acres
- BioMap2 Critical Natural Landscape Protected: 351 acres or 18.7%.

### BioMap2 Components

#### Core Habitat

- 1 Forest Core
- 1 Aquatic Core
- 4 Species of Conservation Concern Cores\*\*
  - 1 reptile, 1 amphibian, 1 fish, 2 mussels, 1 plant

#### Critical Natural Landscape

- 1 Landscape Block
- 1 Aquatic Core Buffer

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

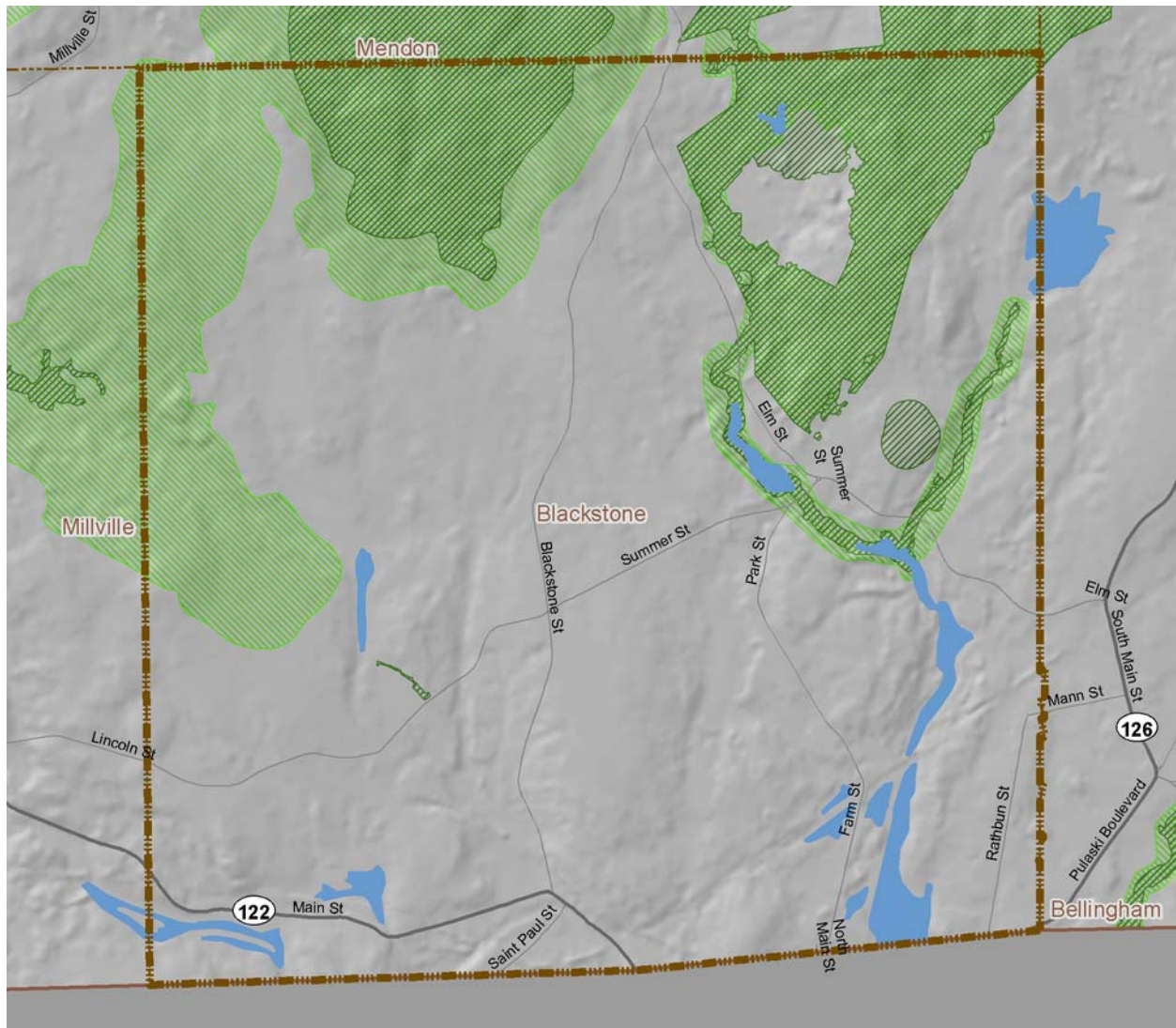
\*\* See next pages for complete list of species, natural communities and other biodiversity elements.









### BioMap2 Core Habitat and Critical Natural Landscape in Blackstone



-  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](http://www.mass.gov/nhesp).



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

**Mussels**

[Creper](#), (*Strophitus undulatus*), SC

[Triangle Floater](#), (*Alasmidonta undulata*), Non-listed SWAP species

**Amphibians**

[Four-toed Salamander](#), (*Hemidactylium scutatum*), Non-listed SWAP

**Fishes**

[American Brook Lamprey](#), (*Lampetra appendix*), T

**Reptiles**

[Eastern Box Turtle](#), (*Terrapene carolina*), SC

**Plants**

[Grass-leaved Ladies'-tresses](#), (*Spiranthes vernalis*), T

**Other BioMap2 Components**

[Forest Core](#)

[Aquatic Core](#)

[Landscape Block](#)

[Aquatic Core Buffer](#)

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.

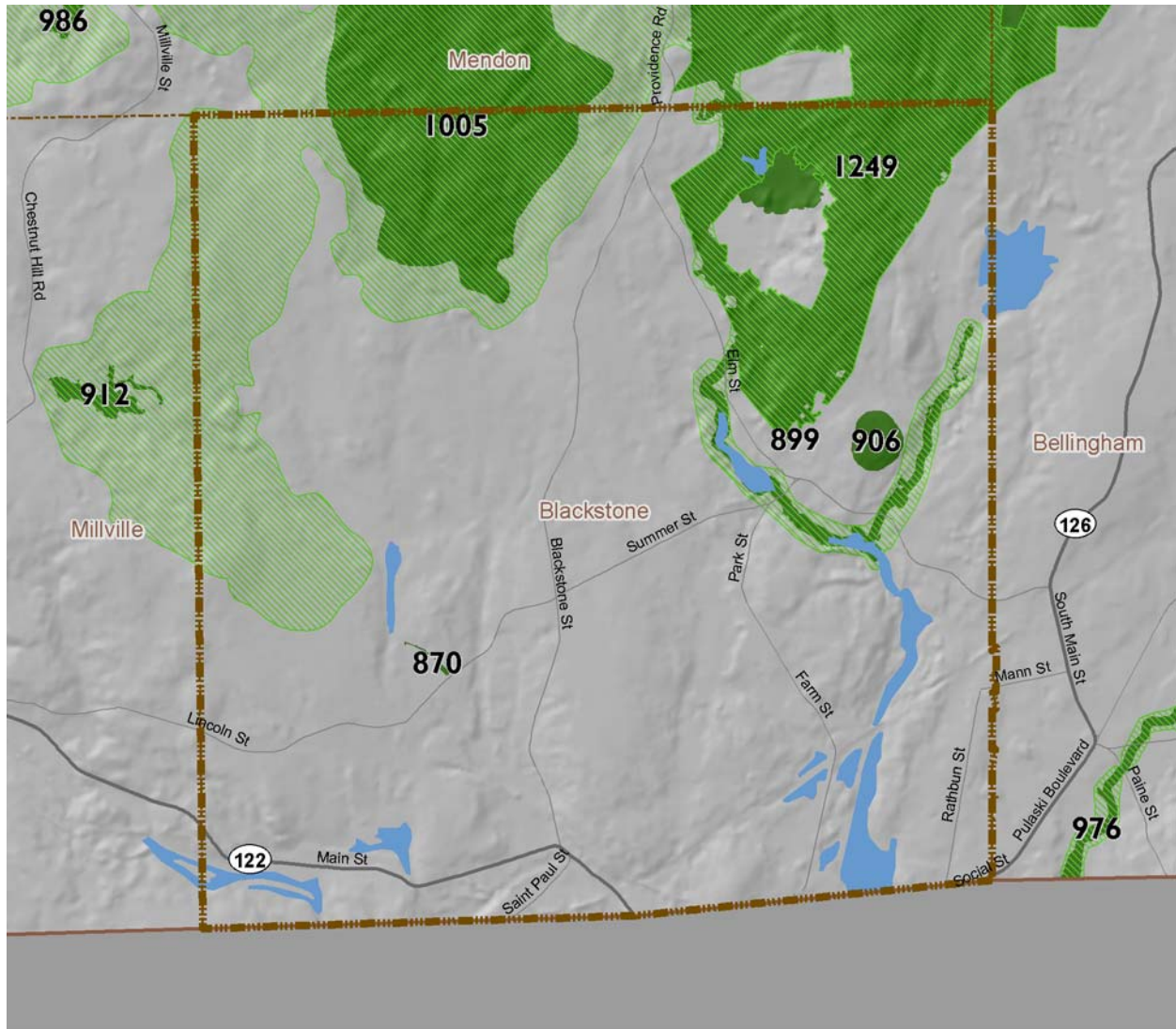
S3 = Vulnerable communities, typically have 21-100 sites or limited acreage across the state.





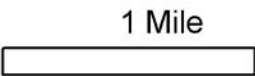


### BioMap2 Core Habitat in Blackstone

Core IDs correspond with the following element lists and summaries.



-  BioMap2 Core Habitat
-  BioMap2 Critical Natural Landscape





Elements of BioMap2 Cores

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

**Core 870**

Species of Conservation Concern

Grass-leaved Ladies'-tresses

*Spiranthes vernalis*

T

**Core 899**

Species of Conservation Concern

Eastern Box Turtle

*Terrapene carolina*

SC

**Core 906**

Species of Conservation Concern

Four-toed Salamander

*Hemidactylium scutatum*

Non-listed SWAP

**Core 1005**

Forest Core

**Core 1249**

Wetland Core

Aquatic Core

Species of Conservation Concern

Climbing Fern

*Lygodium palmatum*

SC

Creeper

*Strophitus undulatus*

SC

Triangle Floater

*Alasmidonta undulata*

Non-listed SWAP

Oak Hairstreak

*Satyrium favonius*

SC

Marbled Salamander

*Ambystoma opacum*

T

Eastern Box Turtle

*Terrapene carolina*

SC

American Brook Lamprey

*Lampetra appendix*

T







## Core Habitat Summaries

### **Core 870**

A 2-acre Core Habitat featuring a Species of Conservation Concern.

Grass-leaved Ladies'-tresses is a slender, erect orchid of dry sandy habitats.

### **Core 899**

A <1-acre Core Habitat featuring a Species of Conservation Concern.

The Eastern Box Turtle is a terrestrial turtle, inhabiting many dry and moist woodland and early successional habitat. Development, roads, collection, and disease are the primary conservation concerns.

### **Core 906**

A 28-acre Core Habitat featuring a Species of Conservation Concern.

Four-toed Salamanders live in forested habitats surrounding swamps, bogs, marshes, vernal pools, and other fish-free waters that are used as breeding sites. Most breeding sites in MA are characterized by pit-and-mound topography with significant sphagnum-moss cover. Eggs are typically laid in mounds or patches of sphagnum moss that overhang water. Upon hatching, the larvae wriggle through the moss and drop into the water, where they will develop for several weeks prior to metamorphosis.

### **Core 1005**

An 892-acre Core Habitat featuring Forest Core.

Forest Cores are the best examples of large, intact forests that are least impacted by roads and development. Forest Cores support many bird species sensitive to the impacts of roads and development and help maintain ecological processes found only in unfragmented forest patches.

### **Core 1249**

A 3,367-acre Core Habitat featuring Wetland Core, Aquatic Core, and Species of Conservation Concern.

Wetland Cores are 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 are intact river corridors within which important physical and ecological processes of the river or stream occur. They delineate integrated and functional ecosystems for fish species and other aquatic Species of Conservation Concern.





Climbing Fern does not have the characteristic overall shape of most ferns. Instead, it is an evergreen, ivy-like plant which sprawls over the ground or climbs clockwise short distances up shrubs and coarse herbs. Climbing Fern grows in moist pine-oak-maple woods with an open understory, in moist thickets, and along stream margins. This plant prefers acidic soils that are sandy and rich in humus, but nutrient-poor.

Creepers are freshwater mussels that inhabit low-gradient reaches of small to large rivers with sand or gravel substrates. Cool to warm water with diverse fish assemblages best support Creepers.

Triangle Floaters are freshwater mussels commonly found in low-gradient river reaches with sand and gravel substrates and low to moderate water velocities, although they are found in a wide range of substrate and flow conditions.

In Massachusetts, the Oak Hairstreak inhabits xeric and open oak woodland and barrens on rocky uplands and sandplains. Adults are often found nectaring in dry, open, weedy or scrub areas, such as old fields, clearings, powerline or pipeline cuts, abandoned gravel pits, etc. New Jersey tea (*Ceanothus americanus*), dogbanes (*Apocynum* spp.), milkweeds (*Asclepias* spp.), and blueberries (*Vaccinium* spp.) are favored nectar sources, although others are used. Larvae feed on various oaks (*Quercus* spp.) across the species' range; particular oak species have not been documented in Massachusetts.

Adult and juvenile Marbled Salamanders inhabit upland forests during most of the year, where they reside in small-mammal burrows and other subsurface retreats. Adults migrate during late summer or early fall to breed in dried portions of vernal pools, swamps, marshes, and other predominantly fish-free wetlands. Eggs are deposited under logs, leaf-litter, or grass tussocks and hatch after being inundated by fall rains. Larvae metamorphose during late spring, whereupon they disperse into upland forest.

The Eastern Box Turtle is a terrestrial turtle, inhabiting many dry and moist woodland and early successional habitat. Development, roads, collection, and disease are the primary conservation concerns.

The American Brook Lamprey is a primitive, eel-like fish. They live in clear, cool streams. Adults spawn in pea gravel substrates, while the larvae live in areas with substrates consisting of fine sand and muck, often in backwaters or stream margins.

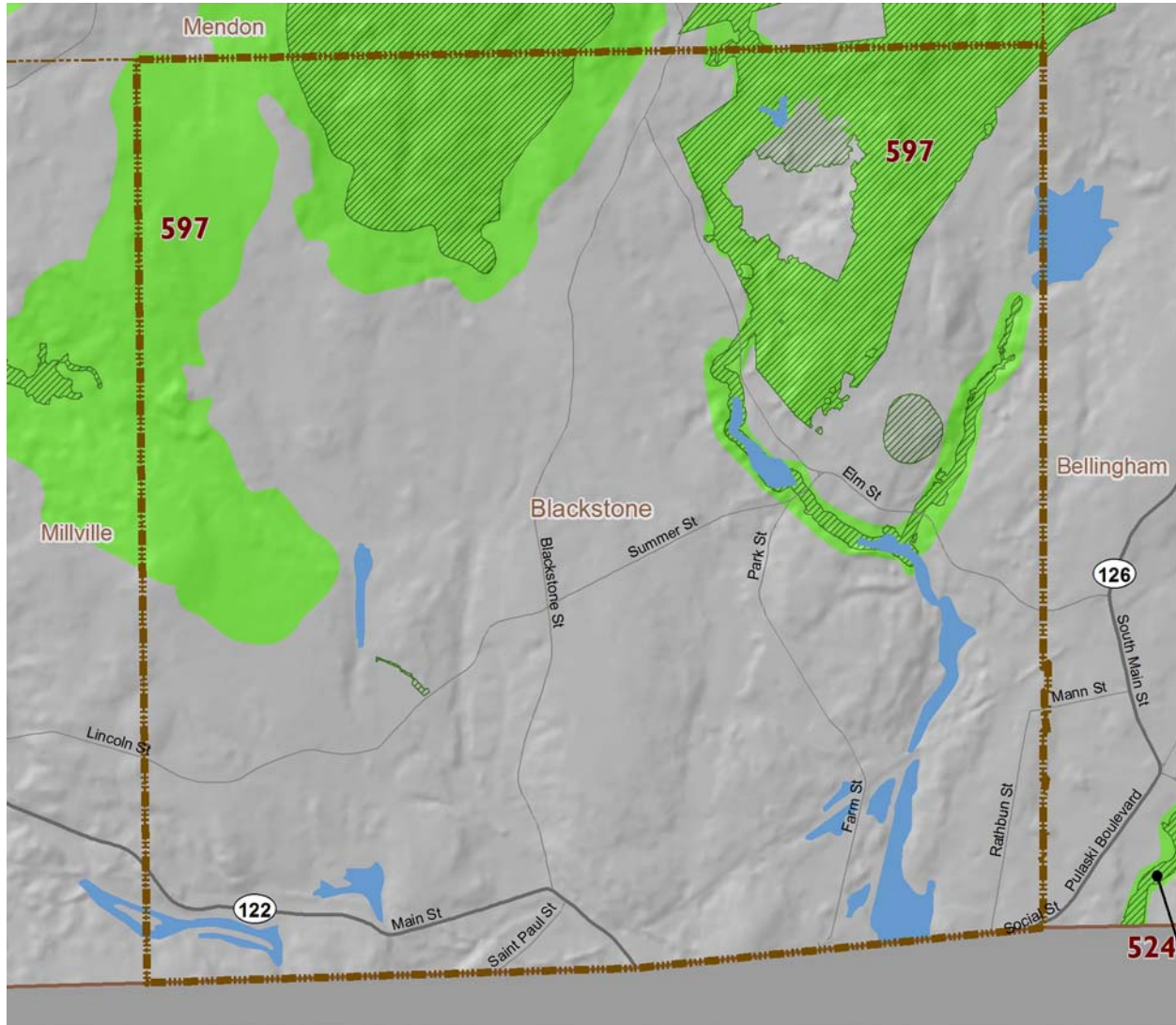








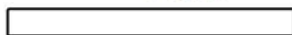
### BioMap2 Critical Natural Landscape in Blackstone

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



-  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](http://www.mass.gov/nhesp).



### Elements of BioMap2 Critical Natural Landscapes

This section lists all elements of BioMap2 Critical Natural Landscapes that fall *entirely or partially* within Blackstone. The elements listed here may not occur within the bounds of Blackstone.

#### **CNL 597**

Aquatic Core Buffer  
Landscape Block  
Wetland Core Buffer





## Critical Natural Landscape Summaries

### **CNL 597**

A 7,157-acre Critical Natural Landscape featuring Aquatic Core Buffer, Wetland Core Buffer and Landscape Block.

A variety of analyses were used to identify protective upland buffers around wetlands and rivers. One, the variable width buffers methodology, included the most intact areas around each wetland and river, by extending deeper into surrounding unfragmented habitats than into developed areas adjacent to each wetland. Other upland buffers were identified through the rare species habitat analysis. In this way, the conservation of wetland buffers will support the habitats and functionality of each wetland, and also include adjacent uplands that are important for many species that move between habitat types.

Landscape Blocks, the primary component of Critical Natural Landscapes, are large areas of intact predominately natural vegetation, consisting of contiguous forests, wetlands, rivers, lakes, and ponds, as well as coastal habitats such as barrier beaches and salt marshes. Pastures and power-line rights-of-way, which are less intensively altered than most developed areas, were also included since they provide habitat and connectivity for many species. Collectively, these natural cover types total 3.6 million acres across the state. An Ecological Integrity assessment was used to identify the most intact and least fragmented areas. These large Landscape Blocks are most likely to maintain dynamic ecological processes such as buffering, connectivity, natural disturbance, and hydrological regimes, all of which help to support wide-ranging wildlife species and many other elements of biodiversity.

In order to identify critical Landscape Blocks in each ecoregion, different Ecological Integrity thresholds were used to select the largest intact landscape patches in each ecoregion while avoiding altered habitat as much as possible. This ecoregional representation accomplishes a key goal of *BioMap2* to protect the ecological stages that support a broad suite of biodiversity in the context of climate change. Blocks were defined by major roads, and minimum size thresholds differed among ecoregions to ensure that *BioMap2* includes the best of the best in each ecoregion.

This mostly forested 6,505-acre Landscape Block is the sixth largest of 62 Blocks in the ecoregion.



# 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](http://www.mass.gov/nhesp).