



## Sandy River Beaches

Sandbars and beaches along the river from Bartlett, New Hampshire, to Fryeburg, Maine, host special communities of rare plants and animals. One example of such a community is the Hudsonia River Beach, an area inhabited by beach heather and big bluesiem, as well as pinweed and species of goldenrod. Globally rare plants do well along the Upper Saco because these surprisingly sensitive natural communities actually thrive where frequent disturbance by scouring flows and sand deposition limits the ability of competitors to gain a foothold.

While there may be few plant and animal competitors in such inhospitable sandy conditions, inappropriate human use of sandbars and beaches is a major threat to the habitat. Treat this fragile environment with care. Do not camp on or trample natural vegetation. Choose durable surfaces like nonvegetated gravel bars to stop on instead of mossy or grassy stream banks.

## The Floodplain Forest



Floodplains are low-lying areas along the banks of rivers or streams that experience regular heavy waterflow events, like spring run-off, during which the water overflows the main channel. The forest communities that persist here are adapted to inundation and waterlogging by river floodwaters that carry large amounts of silt, sand, and debris downstream.

Dominated by a canopy of silver maples and a rich undergrowth of ferns, the Saco River floodplain includes the largest hardwood-floodplain forest in Maine. The leaves of the silver maple are more deeply lobed and silvery-white on the underside than on other maples, while the most common fern located in the floodplain forests is the ostrich fern—feathery in appearance and growing in tall upright vase-shaped clumps. Paddlers can also easily identify the cardinal flower, a rather showy scarlet flower growing on stream banks.

Beyond this low floodplain rise forests of red oak, sugar maple, and American elm, providing excellent habitat for wood ducks and pileated woodpeckers, rare turtles and frogs, and snakes and salamanders. The forest also is an important travel corridor for black bear and moose. The floodplain forest around Mount Tom, in particular, provides a variety of wildlife habitats. A watchful eye can view rare birds, such as the golden eagle, the bald eagle, and the peregrine falcon, as well as the peaks of the Presidential Range, from the ledges of Mount Tom.



## Freshwater Ecosystems

The Upper Saco River has one of the most extensive natural floodplain ecosystems remaining in New England. Special features of the floodplain's delicate environment, such as floodplain forests and vernal pools, provide critical habitat for freshwater plants, fish, and invertebrates. The natural occurrence of flooding on the Upper Saco creates habitats for rare plants, such as Long's bulrush, a member of the sedge family which is found in few other places in the world. One third of its known occurrences are in the Saco River floodplain ecosystem.

Floodplain ecosystems are in great danger. Across the country, more than half of the wetlands and more than 80 percent of the riparian (stream bank) ecosystems are severely degraded due to human alteration. Half of all freshwater mussels and crayfish, and one-third of all freshwater fishes and amphibians are threatened with extinction. Remember: Be a respectful paddler and always practice Leave No Trace principles.

## Rules and Regulations

### FISHING LICENSE

Fishing in both New Hampshire and Maine requires a valid fishing license from the state in which you are fishing. For more information visit [www.wildlife.state.nh.us](http://www.wildlife.state.nh.us) and [www.state.me.us](http://www.state.me.us).

### FIRE PERMITS

A permit is required for all open fires in New Hampshire. Contact your local fire department for more information. In Maine a permit is also required for all open fires along the Saco River in Oxford County (available at the AMC's Swan Falls Campground and Jockey Cap Store in Fryeburg or Grants Market in East Brownfield). Keep fires small and extinguish with water, not sand—buried coals can burn for hours.

### ALCOHOL

Alcohol consumption and intoxication in public is forbidden according to New Hampshire and Maine law—and these laws are enforced. Bad decisions, personal injury, and disruptive behavior can result from overuse. Take responsibility for yourself and those in your group.



## Fish of the Saco River

Historically, alewife, American shad, and Atlantic salmon were common in the Saco River basin, but their populations have diminished due to the adverse impact of construction and industrial development that blocks the passage to traditional spawning grounds and degrades water and habitat quality through pollution. Ongoing efforts, however, to restore anadromous fish (species that spend part of their lives in the ocean but move into fresh water to spawn) to the Saco River are improving. With enhanced water quality and the recent installation of state-of-the-art fish-passage facilities, the alewife, shad, and salmon could soon be restored fully to the Saco River.

### DISPOSE OF WASTE PROPERLY

Pack it in, pack it out, including trash, leftover food, and litter; carry waste water away from the river, use biodegradable soap, and dispose of it in the soil at least 200 feet from shore or other nearby water sources; latrines and dumpsters are available at all access points. If facilities are otherwise not available, human waste should be deposited in "cat-holes" dug 6 to 8 inches deep and at least 200 feet from water. Do not burn or bury trash.

### LEAVE WHAT YOU FIND

Preserve the past; examine, but do not touch, cultural or historic structures and artifacts; leave natural objects (rocks and plants) as you find them; avoid introducing or transporting non-native species—clean off watercraft and watercraft trailers away from waterways before and after use.

### MINIMIZE CAMPFIRE IMPACTS

Campfires can cause lasting and unnecessary impact—use a gas or propane stove for cooking; where fires are permitted, use established fire areas; keep fires small, put out all campfires completely, then scatter cool ashes.

### RESPECT WILDLIFE

Treat the riverbank with care; do not pick or trample plants or flowers; respect the wildlife—view from a safe distance and never feed.

### BE CONSIDERATE OF OTHERS

When on the river, avoid landing on posted and unposted private lands; respect other visitors and protect the quality of their experience; be courteous; let nature's sounds prevail—avoid loud voices and noise.

map continues above left

map continues on reverse