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BIRCH FORESTS OF THE NORTH-WESTERN LADOGA REGION

M. A. Makarova[a,b,#]

[a] *Komarov Botanical Institute of the Russian Academy of Sciences*
Prof. Popov Str., 2, St. Petersburg, 197376, Russia

[b] *Arkhangelsk Branch of the Federal State Budgetary Institution "Roslesinforg"*
Nikitova Str., 13, Arkhangelsk, 163062, Russia

[#]*e-mail: MMakarova@binran.ru*

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In order to compile a large-scale vegetation map (M 1: 25000), a key plot (35 km^2) was studied. The studied plot is located in the selga-hollow landscape area known as the North-Western Ladoga region. The main purposes of the study were to inventory the phytocoenotic diversity of the territory, and estimate the present-day changes of vegetation cover. The key plot is located in the area of the Baltic Crystalline Shield granite rock outcrops. Landscapes represent selga hills (granites and granite-gneiss compose them), limnetic clayey terraces and peat bogs in the selga depressions. The Ladoga Lake renders smoothed influence on the climatic conditions near shores (cool rainy summer, warm autumn and winter). The most widespread vegetation type is pine forests. Mixed forests (birch, aspen, young pine and spruce) replace coniferous forests after fires or felling.

The article deals only with the birch forests described within the mapped area. The birch forests of the key plot are formed by two species: *Betula pubescens* and/or *B. pendula*. 2 groups of associations (Betuleta herbosa, B. sphagnosa), 8 associations and 4 variants of associations of birch forests were identified. The birch forests of the herb group are: ass. Betuletum calamagrostidosum arundinaceae, B. oxalidosum, B. filipendulosum, B. calamagrostidosum canescenti. Within the ass. B. calamagrostidosum canescenti, a new variant (riparium) is described. The birch forests of the sphagnum group are: ass. Betuletum equisetoso-sphagnosum, B. caricoso-herboso-sphagnosum, B. myrtilloso-sphagnosum, B. fruticuloso-polytrichoso-sphagnosum.

Keywords: birch forests, *Betula pubescens*, *Betula pendula*, southern taiga, Baltic crystalline shield

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