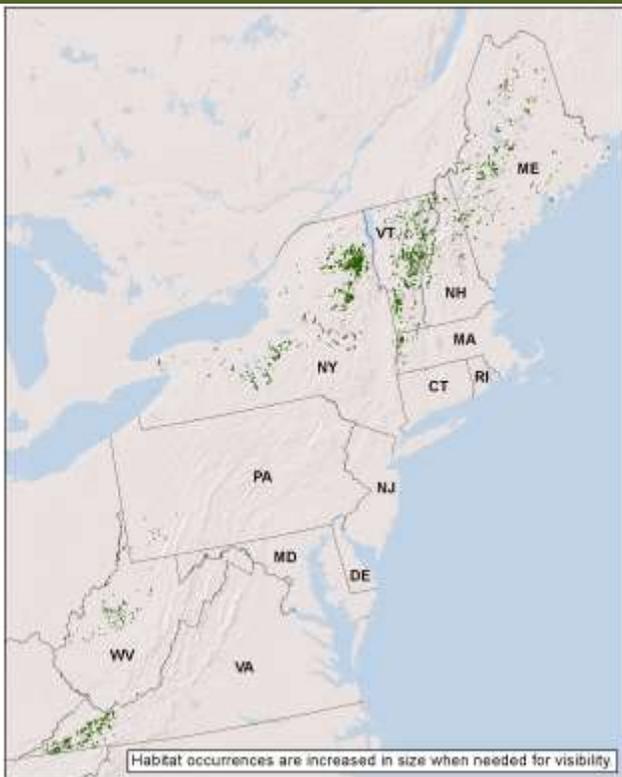




Macrogroup: Cliff and Talus

This map is a modeled distribution based on current data and is not a substitute for field based inventory. Contact your State Natural Heritage Ecologist for more information about this habitat.



© Elizabeth Thompson (Vermont Land Trust)

Description:

A sparsely vegetated cliff or talus slope formed on limestone, dolomite, dolostone, or other calcareous bedrock. The high alkalinity (pH>7) increases nutrient availability, but the lack of soil, constant erosion, and harsh edaphic conditions limits vegetation to herbs, ferns, and sparse trees growing in rock crevices or soil pockets. Northern white cedar is characteristic and may dominate on some cliffs, sometimes reaching ages upwards of 800-1000 years. Ash and basswood and bladdernut are other woody indicators of the enriched setting, as are ferns like spleenwort and cliffbrake, and wiry herbs such as rock whitlow grass. This system includes the narrow zone of vegetation at the horizontal cliff top where growing conditions are harsh and often gladelike or grassy.

Ecological Setting and Natural Processes:

Near-vertical cliffs and talus slopes occurring on limestone or other calcareous rock, associated with steep hill slopes, bluffs, and river gorges. Wind and water erosion, mass movement, and fire are primary system dynamics. Harsh edaphic conditions limit the vegetation cover. Occurs widely with distinct variants in the Appalachians, Ridge and Valley Province and adjacent Cumberland Plateau, and the north-central interior west of the Appalachians.

Similar Habitat Types:

Cliff and talus systems have also been modeled for those steep landforms on other (acidic and circumneutral) lithologies.

State Distribution: MA, ME, NH, NY, PA, VA, VT, WV

Total Habitat Acreage: 56,251

Percent Conserved: 48.2%

State	State Habitat %	State Acreage	GAP 1&2 (acres)	GAP 3 (acres)	Unsecured (acres)
NY	39%	21,973	14,474	2,291	5,208
VT	28%	15,736	1,169	3,588	10,979
ME	14%	7,886	1,108	1,286	5,492
VA	7%	3,892	272	380	3,240
NH	7%	3,757	748	586	2,423
MA	3%	1,868	895	267	706
WV	2%	1,020	6	1	1,013
PA	0%	118	7	8	103

Crosswalk to State Name Examples:

Calcareous Rock Cliff Community (MA), Cliff Face And Rocky Outcrops (ME), Montane - Subalpine Circumneutral Cliff (NH), Calcareous Cliff Community (NY), Rock Habitats (PA), Appalachian Xeric Calcareous Cliff (VA), Boreal/Temperate Calcareous Cliff (VT)

Crosswalk to State Wildlife Action Plans:

Cliff Face and Rocky Outcrops (ME), Cliffs (NH), Cliff and Talus (NY), Rock Habitats (PA), Barren Habitat - Balds (VA), Cliffs and Talus Slopes - Boreal Calcareous Cliff (VT)

Places to Visit this Habitat:

Mount Greylock State Reservation | MA
 White Mountain National Forest | NH
 Dix/Giant Mountain Wilderness | NY
 High Peaks Wilderness Area | NY
 Green Mountain National Forest | VT

Associated Species: *Appendix lists scientific names*

BIRDS: eastern phoebe, golden eagle, raven, turkey vulture

PLANTS: birds-eye primrose (*Primula mistassinica*), blake's milk-vetch (*Astragalus robbinsii* var. *minor*), braya (*Braya humilis*), bulrush sedge (*Carex scirpoidea*), butterwort (*Pinguicula vulgaris*), few-flowered spikerush (*Eleocharis pauciflora*), fragile rock-brake (*Cryptogramma stelleri*), fragrant cliff woodfern (*Dryopteris fragrans*), hyssop-leaved fleabane (*Erigeron hyssopifolius*), lyre-leaved rock-cress (*Arabis lyrata*), roseroot (*Sedum rosea*), smooth cliff brake (*Pellaea glabella*), smooth rock-cress (*Arabis laevigata*), smooth woodsia (*Woodsia glabella*), supple panic grass (*Panicum flexile*), wall-rue (*Asplenium rutamuraria*), yellow mountain saxifrage (*Saxifraga aizoides*)

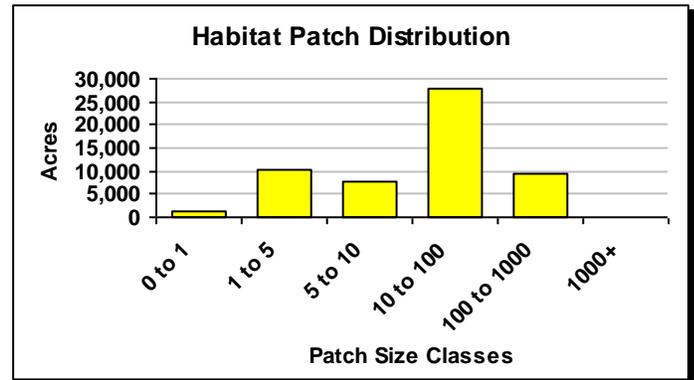
Species of Concern (G1-G4): *Appendix lists scientific names*

BIRDS: peregrine falcon

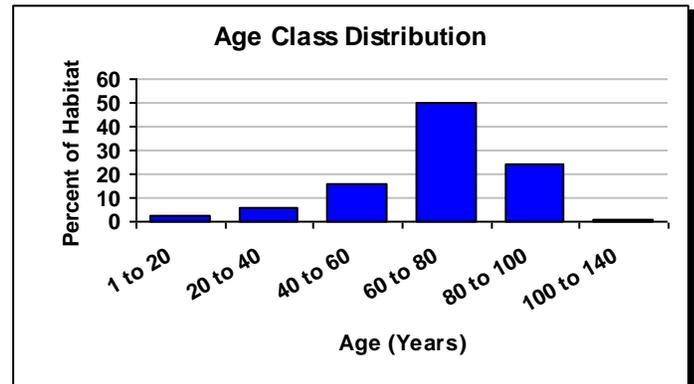
PLANTS: Drummond's rock-cress (*Arabis drummondii*), green spleenwort (*Asplenium trichomanes ramosum*), purple mountain saxifrage (*Saxifraga oppositifolia*), rock whitlow-grass (*Draba arabisans*)



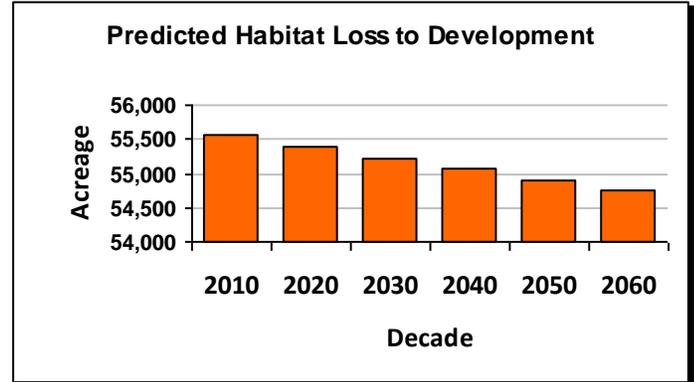
© Eric Sorenson (Vermont Fish & Wildlife)



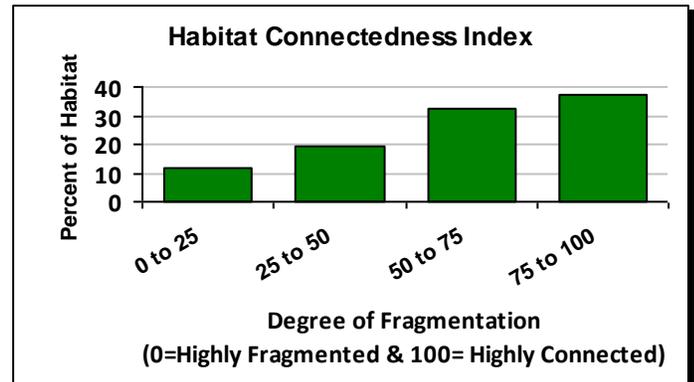
The average patch size for this habitat is 6 acres and the largest single patch is 612 acres. This chart shows the proportion of the habitat that is in each patch-size class.



This chart shows the average age of trees associated with this habitat based on forest inventory data. For non-forested systems or small habitats the average age is influenced by the surroundings.



This chart shows the predicted loss of habitat over the next five decades (824 acres) if loss continues at the same rate as 1990-2000. The average rate of loss is 16 acres per year.



This metric measures how connected or fragmented the land directly surrounding (18 square miles) the habitat is, this the chart shows the proportion of the habitat in each connectedness class.