

Acidic Cliff

State Rank S4

Community Description

Sparse vegetation occurs on steep outcrops or cliffs of granitic or other acidic rock. Marginal wood fern and rock polypody are characteristic ferns; fragrant wood fern can be found on cooler sites. Rock tripe lichens may form extensive patches.

Soil and Site Characteristics

Sites occupy nearly vertical to vertical outcrops of non calcareous, erosion resistant rocks. Most are dry, with large unvegetated areas; a moist microclimate is maintained over local areas by runoff or seeps from higher elevations, or, in gorges, by the flowing streamwater. Smaller ledges and outcrops (e.g., less than 5,000 square feet of rock exposure) should be considered as inclusions in the surrounding forest rather than distinct natural communities.

Diagnostics

Sparsely vegetated cliffs occur below treeline, without circumneutral indicator species.



Rock Tripe and Rock Polypody

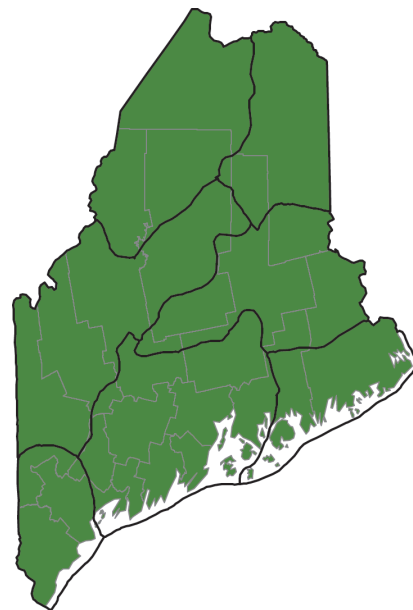
Similar Types

Boreal Circumneutral Outcrops have circumneutral indicator species such as shrubby cinquefoil or certain uncommon herbs. Three-toothed Cinquefoil - Blueberry Low Summit Balds are on summits, not cliffs, and usually have heath shrubs mixed with the herbs.

Conservation, Wildlife, and Management Considerations

Many sites are relatively inaccessible and minimally affected by either forestry or recreational activities. Several are within public lands or conservation ownership.

Location Map



Community is known from this Ecoregion
 Community may occur in this Ecoregion
 Bailey's Ecoregion
 County



Acidic Cliff - Gorge

Common ravens, peregrine falcons, and golden eagles may nest on cliffs in western, northern and coastal Maine.

Distribution

Essentially statewide except for extreme southern Maine, more common northward.

Landscape Pattern: Small Patch. The minimum mapping unit is 5,000 square feet of rock exposure; smaller ledges and outcrops should be considered as inclusions in the surrounding forest rather than distinct natural communities.



Acidic Cliff - Gorge

Characteristic Plants

These plants are frequently found in this community type. Those with an asterisk are often diagnostic of this community.

Herb

Brownish sedge
Common hairgrass
Marginal woodfern
Rand's goldenrod
Rock polypody

Bryoid

Rocktripe lichen

Associated Rare Plants

Fragrant wood fern

Associated Rare Animals

Golden eagle
Peregrine falcon

Examples on Conservation Lands You Can Visit

- Deboullie Ponds Public Lands – Aroostook Co.
- Dunn Falls, Appalachian Trail – Oxford Co.
- Grindstone Falls – Penobscot Co.
- Mount Kineo Public Lands – Piscataquis Co.
- Tunk Mountain, Donnell Pond Public Lands – Hancock Co.