



**Athelstane Barrens**  
**Marinette County**  
**13,000 Acres**

The Glacial Outwash Plains and Glacial Lakebeds Area is concentrated in four distinct areas. The deep glacially-ground sand and gravel soils provide the base for natural community development. Many rare species are limited to this landscape.

Glacial Outwash Plains and Glacial Lakebeds Area Important Natural Features—Xeric Pine-Oak Forests, Pine-Oak Barrens, and Vast Peatlands. Pine Barrens are globally important, and Wisconsin has a vast majority of the pine barrens on earth. We are uniquely responsible.

### Ecology & Significance

Wisconsin Responsibility – Mod High  
 Irreplaceable Features – Mod High  
 Diversity of Natural Features – Mod High  
 Rare Species – Several  
 Conservation Concern Species – Mod High  
 Vulnerability to a Warming Climate – Mod Low  
 Conservation Status – Most

This site has promising conservation opportunities.

Athelstane Barrens features a Pine Barrens community that is part of a formerly large, open landscape located on a gently rolling pitted glacial outwash plain. The site was similar in composition to presettlement barrens with broad sweeping prairie vistas and a distinctive panorama. A focus on logging with the removal of fires and grazing have permitted the site to become wooded. Frost pockets and numerous bedrock outcrops have maintained most of the barrens species. A relatively easy effort of harvesting the trees and applying prescribed fire could maintain much more viable natural communities with a changing climate.

### Flora and Fauna

Patches still maintained in barrens conditions have dominant vegetation consisting of grasses and sedges, and a well-developed shrub layer is present including blueberry, bearberry, prairie willow, and sweet fern. Herbaceous plants include rice grass, poverty oat grass, wintergreen, barren strawberry, and hawkweeds. The area also harbors a diverse and unusual lichen flora.

Butterfly species abound with great populations of two rare species. The rare Harris checkerspot has been photographed on site (see below).



*Photo courtesy Wisconsin Butterflies*



*Photo courtesy Wisconsin DNR*

Originally recognized as being attractive habitat for sharp-tailed grouse, the bird is today absent from the barrens after a population peak in the 1950's. The last recorded observation was in 1972. Common barren birds including the eastern bluebird, eastern towhee, vesper, field, and clay-colored sparrow are still present. Scattered small trees near the stream in the area have a significant population of Golden-winged Warbler, a Species of Greatest Conservation Need..



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