



The Driftless Area is a unique unglaciated landscape. The land in this part of the state is ancient compared with 10,000 years of ice-free land in the rest of the state. Rare species are numerous owing to the diversity and quality of habitats.

Driftless Area Important Natural Features—
 Large River Systems, Southern Forests, Prairie and Savanna, Springs, Cliffs and Talus Slopes, Relict Conifers, Bog Relicts, and Dendritic Landforms.

Ecology & Significance

Wisconsin Responsibility – Mod High
 Irreplaceable Features – High
 Diversity of Natural Features – Moderate
 Rare Species – Several
 Conservation Concern Species – Mod High
 Vulnerability to a Warming Climate – Moderate
 Conservation Status – Some
 This site has promising conservation opportunities.

Algific talus slopes are small and isolated and tend to occur on steep north- or east-facing slopes with a substrate of fractured limestone (dolomite) bedrock that retains ice and emits cold air throughout the growing season. Rainwater enters gaps and fissures in the dolomite, freezes in winter, and then slowly melts during the summer months and produces a steady outflow of cold air that spills out of the base of the slope through numerous vents or small openings in the talus. Sinkholes located on the top of the slope allow warm air to enter, creating a constant flow of cold, moist

Flora and Fauna

Chase Creek supports an algific talus slope, a rare natural community that is known only from the southwestern corner of Wisconsin's Driftless Area. Due to a unique mix of topography, geology, and vegetation, these slopes remain cool throughout the year and are home to rare plants and animals.

In summer, talus slopes appear as lush, treeless openings on forested hillsides. The "refrigerated" limestone blocks covered by thin soil are too cold for most tree roots to survive.



Photo courtesy USF&WS

These cold microhabitats support and persistence of northern plant species, and "periglacial relicts" such as northern monkshood and globally rare terrestrial snails. The Hubricht's vertigo snail is truly remarkable considering it was previously known only from fossils, found in deposits as far south as Kentucky. Scientists were amazed to recently find this species alive on algific slopes in Wisconsin. These slopes are among the state's scarcest ecosystems and despite intensive searches, only two functioning algific slopes are known to remain in Wisconsin.



Photo courtesy LaCrosse Tribune



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