

OTTAWA NATIONAL FOREST SPECIAL INTEREST AREAS

Special Interest Areas (SIAs) are designated for scenic, geologic, botanic, zoologic, paleontological, archaeological/historic, or recreational values, or combinations of these values. The SIA designation allows the Ottawa National Forest to recognize special values of certain areas and to tailor land uses to interpret, maintain and enhance those special features. Seven SIAs are designated on the Ottawa National Forest. Their approximate location is shown on the map below. Descriptions and photos for each SIA follow.



Safety First: Visitors should recognize that the road or route they choose to drive or hike may be crossed by fallen trees or have holes and ruts. Sturdy footgear is recommended for hikers and insect repellent may be advisable in summer. Mosquitoes, biting flies, no-see-ums, and wood and deer ticks may be present. Waterproof footgear may be needed at Divide Sand Wetland and Sturgeon Headwater Wetland Complex SIAs. Plants which sting or cause rashes, such as stinging nettles, poison ivy, or wild parsnip may be present. Toilet facilities or water spigots are not available at any of the SIAs. See special safety note for Norwich Bluff SIA.

For more information, call the Ottawa National Forest at 906-932-1330 or the local Ranger District:
Ontonagon 906-884-2085;
Kenton 906-852-3500;
Watersmeet 906-358-4551

(Photographs were taken by Ottawa employees Chuck Frank, Sue Trull, Ian Shackelford, LeeAnn Atkinson, and Matthew Bushman).

Posse Podzol Terrace

Geologic SIA, 313 acres

This SIA is a unique set of terrace walls and terraces, formed at the interface between an outwash deposit to the south and a lake-influenced heavy till to the north. The soil on the flat terraces is a classic ground water podzol: this soil type was one of the founding concepts in the original Russian version of soil classification and taxonomy. Thus, this soil represents a benchmark in the history of soil taxonomy. This is the only ground water podzol terrace complex mapped on the Ottawa National Forest.



Podzol soils, or spodosols, often form in northern climates under coniferous vegetation. In these soils, the horizons, or layers, that occur include a whitish-gray layer below the duff (litter) and topsoil, where minerals such as iron and aluminum have been leached over time into lower, darker-colored layers. These soils are acidic and can have a hard pan layer. Visitors to this SIA will not immediately see the soil profile, but will see dry northern forest and a hemlock stand, as shown in photos. Along the access road, there are places where soil is exposed and the classic whitish, spodic, horizon may be observed. Enjoy a hike above a benchmark soil!

How to get there: Posse Podzol Terrace SIA is located about 5.2 miles south of Hwy. M-38 near Alston. Take Forest Road 2270 from M-38 to FR 2277. This gated road leads into the SIA and is open to ATVS with seasonal (spring breakup) restrictions. It leads about 1.5 miles along the edge of, and into, the SIA.



Soil cut along FR 2277, where white spodic horizon may be seen.



Classic podzol soil layers, showing white horizon where minerals have moved out, and the darker horizon below where the minerals accumulate.

Silver Mountain Ancient Volcanic Vent Plug

Geologic, scenic, botanic, recreational SIA, 245 acres

Silver Mountain is an isolated basalt dome that was the interior of a volcanic vent. Erosion and glacial scouring exposed the harder inner core rock and left glacial grooves on the summit. Much of the site is exposed rock. At elevation 1,312 feet, it commands a spectacular view of Prickett Lake backwaters and the majority of the Sturgeon River Gorge wilderness and surrounding forested countryside. There is an abandoned mine adit at its base, gated with a structure that allows bats free access to the cave but prevents people. There is a steep packed earth trail including staircases leading to the summit (3 flights with about 80, 58 and 126 steps each). This volcanic vent plug is the largest of three on the Ottawa National Forest (the other two are Haystack Mountain and Mt. Kallio, both near Sidnaw, and only partly on public land).

Due to the surrounding forest, visitors will not see Silver Mountain as an isolated rock spire as they drive to the area. The rock core becomes apparent as one hikes up the staircase route or the more meandering hiking route, both starting from the trailhead parking lot.

Sign at Silver Mountain trailhead.



How to get there: Silver Mountain SIA is located about 8 miles south of Hwy. M-38 near Alston. Take Forest Road 2270 from M-38 to FR 2274. This 0.3 mile road is open to highway legal vehicles and ends at the trailhead/parking lot.

Bat gate on adit at base of Silver Mountain



Staircase trail up Silver Mountain

Grooves left by glaciers on the top of Silver Mountain



View from top of Silver Mountain; note Prickett Lake in background

Bell-Bracken-Englesby Esker Complex

Geologic SIA, 1,423 acres

Eskers are formed as rivers of water flowing through and under a continental ice sheet. As river sediments form, gravel and sand are deposited within the stream and appear as a long, thin, sinuous and steep-sided hill when the glacier recedes. Eskers are the most easily understood glaciomorphic feature for visitors to view the process of glaciation. This esker complex includes 4 of about 190 mapped eskers on the Forest. All of the Ottawa National Forest was glaciated, as was the surrounding Upper Peninsula.

There are no designated trails for the esker SIA, visitors may wander through the woods at will. When one encounters a steep but short slope and a narrow top, the esker has been found! The photos below show a local esker in the SIA and an actively forming esker, with the photo taken from an airplane over the esker, in Alaska.

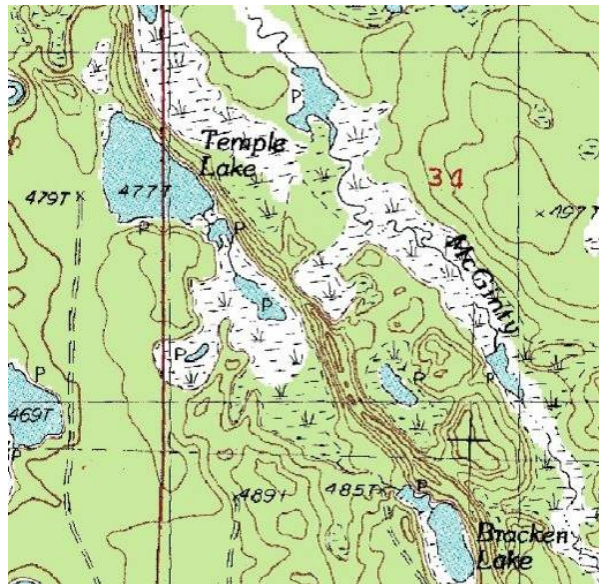


Short, steep esker slope

How to get there: The esker complex is about 9 miles east of Watersmeet, off County Road 208 (old Hwy. 2). For the southern (Englesby Lake) piece of the SIA, follow CR 208 east from Watersmeet about 8.6 miles to FR 3340. Follow 3340 (which is open to passenger cars) about 1 mile to the railroad grade trail. The grade leads to the SIA north end, about 0.2 mile south from the intersection. The grade runs along the westward boundary of the SIA. Forest road 3348, heading south from FR 3340 east of the intersection with the grade, provides seasonal ATV access to the east side of the SIA.



Actively forming esker in Alaska, seen from above glacier



Contour map of esker by Bracken Lake—note the closely spaced lines delineating a narrow, steeply-sloping, landform

For the eastern pieces of the SIA, take CR 208 east from Watersmeet about 6 miles to FR 4500. Go northeast on FR 4500 about 2.5 miles to where this road intersects the SIA. Or take FR 4500 about 1.5 miles northeast to FR4507-A. This road is open to all vehicles and heads north to another piece of the SIA. The fourth, easternmost piece (Bell Pond) of the SIA is accessed by FR 4520. Take FR 4500 from CR 208 about 4.6 miles to where 4520 splits off. Follow this road, open to all vehicles, about 0.8 mile to its intersection with FR 4523, which is approximately the SIA

Sturgeon Headwater Wetland Complex SIA

Geologic, zoologic SIA, 503 acres

This is a complex of wetlands in the headwaters of the West Branch Sturgeon River. A spring supplies the water for large organic wetlands. The complex is unique in that it lies within a basin formed in the 6 Mile End Moraine (LTA 6). Side slopes are steep around the edges instead of gradual. Wildlife is abundant and the river has high quality fisheries.



West Branch Sturgeon River within SIA

How to get there: This SIA is located about 7 miles east of Rousseau. Take Forest Road 1700 east from Rousseau about 3.6 miles to Forest Highway 16. Travel south on FH 16 about 2.2 miles to Laird Road. Travel east about 2 miles on Laird Road to the West Branch Sturgeon River crossing. The SIA extends north and south along the river.



Grass and sedge meadow at Laird Rd. within SIA



Stunted jack pines in wetland

Divide Sand Wetland SIA

Geologic, botanic SIA, 1,905 acres

This complex of wetlands is large and flat, with not one 20-foot contour across its area. It forms a watershed divide, with water draining in several directions from the wetland. The organic mat in non-forested portions of the wetland ranges from 8 to 31 inches (20 to 80 cm), and overlies sand. This combination is unusual for the Ottawa. This SIA represents, and encompasses most of, the only flat, sand-based wetland of its type on the Forest. Dispersed throughout the non-forested wetland are slightly higher islands of shallower organics, many vegetated with jack pine, some with older red and white pine trees.



Open water and beaver lodge in SIA

How to get there: This SIA is about 6 miles north of Trout Creek, on Gardner Road. From Trout Creek, just north of Hwy. M-28, travel north on Gardner Rd. about 5.7 miles to a square corner. Follow the road west another 0.9 miles to the east boundary of the SIA. Or, from that square corner, travel west 1.8 miles to another square corner. Here FR 841 (the Blue Road) heads southwest into the SIA.



Stream in Divide Sand Wetland SIA



Blueflag iris and sedges in Divide Sand Wetland



Painted turtles enjoy spring sunshine in SIA

Trap Hills Escarpment SIA

Geologic, scenic, recreational, botanic, zoologic SIA, 4,889 acres

This SIA includes scenery/vistas and cliffs; mining history; several rare plants (fairy bells, blue-eyed mary, male fern, fragrant cliff fern, Farwell's watermilfoil, prairie buttercup); a peregrine falcon hacking site; and recreation opportunities including a segment of the national North Country Trail. It is mostly the Gogebic Ridge-Bergland Hill-Trap Hills-Norwich Bluffs moraines land type association (LTA 212 Jb07). It includes enriched colluvial soils, rock outcrops, talus, and bedrock complexes that are strongly associated with the Trap Hills. It is mostly northern hardwoods forest types, with small areas of black ash drainages. This SIA includes a large, and the core, part of the Trap Hills range on the Forest.

View from top of
Trap Hills
escarpment



How to get there: The Escarpment SIA is northeast of Bergland. From Bergland, travel north on Hwy 64 about 1.9 miles. Turn east on Old M-64. Follow this road about 1 mile to where the road takes a square corner to the north. Continue around the corner, heading north about 2.9 more miles to where Forest Road 326 heads off to the east. You will be traveling along the west edge of the SIA. Turn onto FR 326, which heads into the heart of the SIA. Visitors can travel about 1.7 miles east on FR 326, to where there is a turn around area. From here, visitors can take the "hacking" trail up to the top of the escarpment. The North Country Trail is another route to access this SIA.

Trap Hills pond



Fall color from Trap Hills overlook

Fairy Bells, *Disporum hookeri*, rare plant found in Trap Hills Escarpment SIA



Norwich Outcrop SIA

Geologic, scenic, recreational, botanic, historical SIA, 1,593 acres.



This SIA includes higher elevations, cliffs, views (from on top and from below looking up), several rare plant sites, and a section of the North Country Trail as well as a heritage site and interpretive trail (in progress). It is mostly the Gogebic Ridge-Bergland Hill-Trap Hills-Norwich Bluffs moraines land type association (LTA 212 Jb07). Northern hardwoods dominate, with some oak. Remains of a fire lookout tower and mining works occur in this area. This site is also part of the Trap Hills range, and the only outcrop with this particular group of major historical features.

Safety First: Visitors to Norwich Bluff should be aware that there are numerous old mine shafts scattered around the bluff. Some have wooden or wire fences around them, others do not. Some are more or less filled in, **others are very deep and a fall could cause injury or death.** The Ottawa NF is in the process of filling the most dangerous holes. Visitors must be aware of their surroundings. Please keep an eye on children and dogs and do not let them wander far ahead. Do not head blindly downhill!

How to get there: From Ewen, go west on Hwy M-28 about 5.7 miles. Turn north on Norwich Road, travel about 7 miles to the Ontonagon River crossing. Norwich Bluff will be visible to the north, and above the river. Visitors can walk in on a spur road just north of the river, and hike up the bluff (strenuous). Alternatively, continue on Norwich Road about another 2.6 miles past the river, to where Victoria Road heads east. Go east on Victoria Road about 1.3 miles to Forest Road 642, which heads south into the SIA. This road is only open to non-motorized uses. It is about 1.4 miles long and leads to the remains of the lookout tower and a vista.



Norwich Bluff seen from
Norwich Road (looking N)



Smallflower blue-eyed mary, *Collinsia
parviflora*, a rare plant found in Norwich
Bluff SIA



Old mine shaft, where gaping hole
was filled by blasting surrounding
rock and causing a rock fall



Open mine shaft, fenced



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