

Rock Point Natural Area: An Urban Wilderness

Just minutes from downtown Burlington one can walk under a canopy of old growth hemlocks, marvel at geologic wonders, and watch Peregrine Falcons soar over dramatic lakeshore cliffs. The 94-acre Rock Point Natural Area is an urban wilderness unlike any other.

Jutting prominently into the blue water of Lake Champlain, the peninsula has over a mile of cliff-walled shoreline that provides paddlers and boaters with rare views of what the earliest travelers spotted from the Lake. From atop the cliffs, the Natural Area's nearly three miles of trails offer stunning panoramic views of Lake Champlain, downtown Burlington, the Green Mountains and the Adirondacks.



An Ecological Hot Spot

Rock Point possesses exceptional biological diversity, with over 24 rare species, and pristine examples of rare natural communities, including Limestone Bluff Cedar-Pine Forest, Dry Oak-Hickory-Hophornbeam Forest, and Lake Sand Beach. The area has been identified by ecologists as “one of the most significant rare plant sites in Vermont.”

Limestone Bluff Cedar-Pine Forest: These mostly coniferous forests grow along limestone-rich bluffs where white cedars cling to exposed bedrock cliffs devoid of deep soils. Usually occupying a thin strip along rocky headlands, the slow-growing cedars can reach 300 years in age or more. Red and White Pine, Hophornbeam, and Hemlock may also be found here. Undergrowth is generally sparse, due to the dense shade of the cedars. Rock Point is home to an exceptionally healthy example of this rare forest.

94 Acres | 6,500 Feet of Wild Shoreline | Old Growth Forests | Panoramic Views





Dry Oak-Hickory-Hophornbeam Forest: These open forests are uncommon in northern Vermont, preferring the warmer conditions more commonly found in the southern portions of the state. The understory is sparse in these forests, with woodland sedges often forming a grassy floor among widely-spaced trees.

Lake Sand Beach: Natural sand beaches are rare along Lake Champlain, requiring a specific combination of geography, prevailing currents, and source of sediment. With the mouth of the Winooksi River just to the north and a major current break formed by Rock Point, the sand beach here is one of the finest examples on the entire Lake.

Rare Species

- Minute Duckweed: SH
- Bog Willow: S2
- Hay Sedge: S1
- Smith’s Bulrush: S2
- Creeping Love-grass: S2S3
- Wright’s Spikerush: S2
- Water Hemp: S2
- Champlain Beach Grass (North Beach): S1
- Rock Draba: S2S3
- False Hop Sedge: S2
- Small Skullcap: S2
- Marsh Vetchling: S2
- Narrow Blue-eyed grass: S2S3
- Longleaf Bluet: S2
- Graham’s Rockcress: S2S3

- Seneca Snakeroot: S2S3
- Harsh Sunflower: S2S3
- Golden Corydalis: S2
- Inland Bluegrass: S1

Uncommon Species

- Peregrine Falcon: S3B
- Cursed Crowfoot: S3
- Awned Cyperus: S3
- Downy Arrowwood: S3
- Wild Snowberry: S3
- Purple Clematis: S3
- Buck’s Sedge: S3
- American Bittersweet: S3
- Narrow False oats: S3
- Smooth Cliff-brake: S3

KEY - State Ranked S1: Very Rare, S2: Rare, S3: Uncommon, SH: Known from Historic Records Only

The Rock Point and Arms Forest Coalition

