

Natural Heritage Report on Rare Species and Ecological Communities



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-The information in this report includes only records entered into the NY Natural Heritage databases as of the date of the report. This report is not a definitive statement on the presence or absence of all rare species or significant natural communities at or in the vicinity of this site.
-Refer to the User's Guide for explanations of codes, ranks and fields.
-Location maps for certain species and communities may not be provided 1) if the species is vulnerable to disturbance, 2) if the location and/or extent is not precisely known, 3) if the location and/or extent is too large to display, and/or 4) if the animal is listed as Endangered or Threatened by New York State.

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COMMUNITIES

Calcareous talus slope woodland

This occurrence of Calcareous Talus Slope Woodland is considered significant from a statewide perspective by the NY Natural Heritage Program. It is either an occurrence of a community type that is rare in the state or a high quality example of a more common community type. By meeting specific, documented significance criteria, the NY Natural Heritage Program considers this occurrence to have high ecological and conservation value.

Office Use

NY Legal Status: Unlisted	NYS Rank: S3	5496
Federal Listing:	Global Rank: G3G4	
Last Report: 2000-09-14	EO Rank:	
County: Niagara		
Town: Lewiston, Niagara Falls - City		
Location: Niagara Gorge Whirlpool Woods		

General Quality and Habitat: The community is of moderate size, but within a largely developed landscape. A number of exotic species can be found in communities directly adjacent to the cliff face, but generally not at high densities directly on the cliff face. Restoring areas of the cliff to a more natural state and eliminating some activities could potentially raise the overall rank of this community. A sparsely vegetated to completely forested calcareous talus slope community lying below an extensive limestone cliff and above the Niagara River. As currently documented, the community extends the length of the Niagara Gorge from Niagara Falls downstream roughly 8000 meters to a large dam operated by the New York Power Authority. The plateau above the rim of the gorge is developed for recreation and sightseeing with several picnic grounds, tourists facilities, parking lots and roads. The landscape surrounding the community is rural to the north consisting of primarily abandoned farm fields and scattered hamlets and urban and heavily populated to the east, west and south.

Calcareous cliff community

This occurrence of Calcareous Cliff Community is considered significant from a statewide perspective by the NY Natural Heritage Program. It is either an occurrence of a community type that is rare in the state or a high quality example of a more common community type. By meeting specific, documented significance criteria, the NY Natural Heritage Program considers this occurrence to have high ecological and conservation value.

Office Use

NY Legal Status: Unlisted	NYS Rank: S3	10512
Federal Listing:	Global Rank: G4	
Last Report: 2000-09-14	EO Rank:	
County: Niagara		
Town: Lewiston, Niagara Falls - City		
Location: Niagara Gorge Whirlpool Woods		

General Quality and Habitat: The community is of moderate size, but within a largely developed landscape. A number of exotic species can be found in communities directly adjacent to the cliff face, but generally not at high densities directly on the cliff face. Restoring areas of the cliff to a more natural state and eliminating some activities could potentially raise the overall rank. Sparsely vegetated limestone cliffs along the east rim of the Niagara Gorge from Niagara Falls downstream roughly 8000 meters. The cliff grades into a calcareous talus slope woodland below the cliff. The plateau above the rim of the gorge is developed for recreation and sightseeing with several picnic grounds, tourists facilities, parking lots and roads. The landscape surrounding the community is rural to the north consisting of primarily abandoned farm fields and scattered hamlets and urban and heavily populated to the east, west and south.

FISH



Acipenser fulvescens

Lake Sturgeon	NY Legal Status: Threatened	NYS Rank: S1S2 - Critically imperiled	Office Use 8830
	Federal Listing:	Global Rank: G3G4 - Vulnerable	BOF
	Last Report: **	EO Rank: **	
	County: Niagara		
	Town: Lewiston		
	Location: At, or in the vicinity of, the project site.		
	General Quality and Habitat: **For information on the population at this location and management considerations, please contact the NYS DEC Regional Wildlife Manager for the Region where the project is located.		

FRESHWATER MUSSELS

Obovaria olivaria

Hickorynut	NY Legal Status: Unlisted	NYS Rank: SH - Historical	Office Use 11306
	Federal Listing:	Global Rank: G4 - Apparently secure	
	Last Report: 1997-06-10	EO Rank: Possibly Extant	
	County: Erie, Niagara		
	Town: Grand Island, Niagara Falls - City		
	Location: Niagara River Buckhorn Island and Goat Island		
	General Quality and Habitat: David Strayer (2003) indicated that <i>Obovaria olivaria</i> probably existed in small numbers in the Niagara River in the early 1990s before the zebra mussel outbreak in the mid-1990s. It appears that zebra mussels have killed most of the unionids as only old, chalky shells were found. However, Strayer also indicated that additional surveys are needed to determine if this species as well as other unionids are truly extirpated from this site. Buckhorn Island: The mussels were found on a sand bar of firm sand under 0.25-1 meter of water fringing a deep channel. There are patches of macrophytes (<i>Scirpus</i> , <i>Potamogeton</i>) and the water is clear. Goat Island: The mussels were found near Goat Island. The water current is fast as it leads to Niagara Falls.		

Villosa iris

Rainbow	NY Legal Status: Unlisted	NYS Rank: S2S3 - Imperiled	Office Use 8707
	Federal Listing:	Global Rank: G5Q - Secure	
	Last Report: 1997-06-10	EO Rank: Extant	
	County: Erie, Niagara		
	Town: Grand Island, Niagara Falls - City		
	Location: Niagara River Buckhorn Island and Goat Island		
	General Quality and Habitat: While no live mussels were found in 1997 it is still assumed the population is extant because valves were found. Buckhorn Island: The mussels were found on a sand bar of firm sand under 0.25-1 meter of water fringing a deep channel. There are patches of macrophytes such as <i>Scirpus</i> , <i>Potamogeton</i> and the water is clear. Goat Island: The mussels were found near Goat Island. The water current is fast as it leads to Niagara Falls.		

OTHER

Waterfowl Winter Concentration Area

	NY Legal Status: Unlisted	NYS Rank: S3S4 - Vulnerable	Office Use 7636
	Federal Listing:	Global Rank: GNR - Not ranked	
	Last Report: 1994-01-25	EO Rank: Extant	
	County: Niagara		
	Town: Lewiston, Porter		
	Location: Lower Niagara River		
	General Quality and Habitat: A very large, deep riverine habitat that is comparable to open water areas in Lake Ontario. Here the river abruptly broadens from the very narrow, deep, fast flowing stretch of the gorge at the generating stations. A variety of waterfowl species also feed in the lower Niagara River rapids (upstream from the Niagara Escarpment), but concentrations are limited due to lack of resting areas. The lower rapids do not freeze over in winter providing some suitable habitat in any given year.		

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Gull Colony

NY Legal Status: Unlisted	NYS Rank: SNR - Rank not assigned	Office Use 9280
Federal Listing:	Global Rank: GNR - Not ranked	
Last Report: 1998-05-25	EO Rank: Extant	
County: Niagara		S
Town: Niagara Falls - City		
Location: Goat Island		
General Quality and Habitat:	Although a full survey (count) was conducted a rank of "E" was assigned because there are no global rank specifications for this type of occurrence. The nests are in open rocky areas on cliff ledges and talus slope. The slope below the cliff has sections of trees, shrubs and grass.	

VASCULAR PLANTS

Carex garberi

Elk Sedge	NY Legal Status: Endangered	NYS Rank: S1 - Critically imperiled	Office Use 9751
	Federal Listing:	Global Rank: G5 - Secure	
	Last Report: 1990-06-16	EO Rank: Good	
	County: Niagara		S
	Town: Niagara Falls - City		
	Location: Niagara Gorge Whirlpool Woods		
General Quality and Habitat:	The population and habitat are in good shape, but some exotics are present. Deep river gorge with calcareous cliff community of sparse vegetation and large areas of talus. Soils well drained, loose, shaly. With <i>Crataegus</i> sp., <i>Campanula rotundifolia</i> , <i>Thuja occidentalis</i> , <i>Muhlenbergia racemosa</i> , <i>Toxicodendron radicans</i> .		

Gentianopsis virgata

Lesser Fringed Gentian	NY Legal Status: Endangered	NYS Rank: S1 - Critically imperiled	Office Use 10448
	Federal Listing:	Global Rank: G5 - Secure	
	Last Report: 1990-10-06	EO Rank: Fair	
	County: Niagara		S
	Town: Niagara Falls - City		
	Location: Niagara Gorge Whirlpool Woods		
General Quality and Habitat:	This is a small population in good habitat. Deep river gorge with calcareous cliff community of sparse vegetation and large areas of talus. Soils well drained. With <i>Aster lateriflorus</i> , <i>Agrostis stolonifera</i> , <i>Leucanthemum vulgare</i> . Remains of an old railroad bed are evident.		

Liatris cylindracea

Slender Blazing-star	NY Legal Status: Endangered	NYS Rank: S1 - Critically imperiled	Office Use 5818
	Federal Listing:	Global Rank: G5 - Secure	
	Last Report: 2000-09-27	EO Rank: Fair	
	County: Niagara		
	Town: Niagara Falls - City		
	Location: Niagara Gorge Whirlpool Woods		
General Quality and Habitat:	A total of 77 stems from 19 genets and 6 distinct groups within a well-protected gorge system. These plants need high light levels, thus they are found in openings, talus, and disturbed areas. This plant is found on and around a large boulder within the deep gorge of the Niagara River. Additional plants may be found within the talus slope near this large boulder. A trail that parallels that swift-moving rapids of the Niagara River is located approximately 4 meters from this boulder and plants are located directly along the edge of this trail. The plants are growing within the calcareous talus and within cracks of larger dolomite boulders and bedrock.		



Oligoneuron ohioense

Ohio Goldenrod
 NY Legal Status: Threatened
 Federal Listing:
 Last Report:
 County: Niagara
 Town: Lewiston
 Location:
 General Quality and Habitat:

NYS Rank: S2 - Imperiled
 Global Rank: G4 - Apparently secure
 EO Rank: Unassigned

Office Use
 12318

Pellaea glabella ssp. glabella

Smooth Cliff Brake
 NY Legal Status: Threatened
 Federal Listing:
 Last Report: 2000-09-27
 County: Niagara
 Town: Niagara Falls - City
 Location: Niagara Gorge Whirlpool Woods

NYS Rank: S2 - Imperiled
 Global Rank: G5T5 - Secure
 EO Rank: Good

Office Use
 7406

General Quality and Habitat: Over two hundred plants scattered within a protected gorge system. This plant is scattered within the deep river gorge carved out by the Niagara River just below Niagara Falls. The plants are found within a calcareous cliff community and calcareous talus slope woodland. The vegetation is sparse in many areas and the soils are well drained. The remains of an old railroad bed are evident within this gorge system. The "giant rock population" is found on a two-plus story tall dolomitic boulder that fell from the Lockport formation cliffs located above. One side of this rock is directly adjacent to the trail the traverses the entire lower gorge and the other side of this rock rests near the edge of the Niagara River. The plants are mostly found on the south side in partial to full sunlight.

Symphyotrichum oolentangiense

Sky-blue Aster
 NY Legal Status: Endangered
 Federal Listing:
 Last Report: 2008-09-20
 County: Niagara
 Town: Niagara Falls - City
 Location: Niagara Gorge Whirlpool Woods

NYS Rank: S1 - Critically imperiled
 Global Rank: G5 - Secure
 EO Rank: Fair

Office Use
 9142

General Quality and Habitat: There are possibly 100 or more plants in two distinct groups within a well-protected, but unstable system. The plants are found in two distinct areas. Group 1: The plants are located at the top rim of a deep river gorge, just above a high calcareous cliff community. This group is located in a small remnant grassland squeezed between a parking lot and the top rim of the gorge. From this vantage point, there is a great view of the Niagara River gorge and Canada. Group 2: The plants are located within the calcareous talus slope and on the dolomitic limestone flats at the base of the gorge. The soils are well drained and normally quite dry. Within the gorge, there is the remains of an old railroad bed. This portion of the gorge is used most by fisherman trying to gain access to the Niagara River.

13 Records Processed

More detailed information about many of the rare and listed animals and plants in New York, including biology, identification, habitat, conservation, and management, are available online in Natural Heritage's Conservation Guides at www.acris.nynhp.org, from NatureServe Explorer at <http://www.natureserve.org/explorer>, from NYSDEC at <http://www.dec.ny.gov/animals/7494.html> (for animals), and from USDA's Plants Database at <http://plants.usda.gov/index.html> (for plants).

More detailed information about many of the natural community types in New York, including identification, dominant and characteristic vegetation, distribution, conservation, and management, is available online in Natural Heritage's Conservation Guides at www.acris.nynhp.org. For descriptions of all community types, go to <http://www.dec.ny.gov/animals/29384.html> and click on Draft Ecological Communities of New York State.