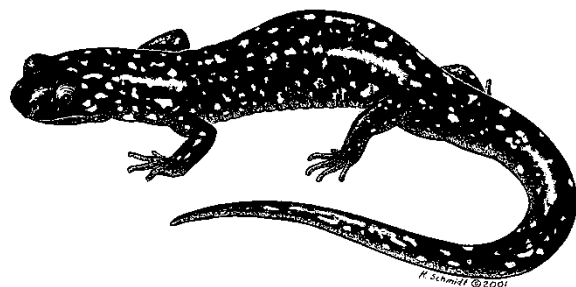


## CREST, LEDGE, AND TALUS

These are areas of small or large bedrock outcrops, cliffs, ledges, talus (accumulation of rock fragments below a ledge), or erratics (isolated boulders). Soils are shallow, and vegetation is often stunted and sparse, but many areas are well-forested. An extraordinary array of rare plants and animals are associated with these habitats in the Hudson Valley.



Slimy salamander, © K. Schmidt 2001

### TYPICAL PLANTS

- Red oak, chestnut oak, sugar maple, black birch
- Scrub oak, low blueberries, huckleberries
- Lichens, mosses, grasses, sedges

#### On calcareous (calcium-rich) bedrock:

- Red cedar, hackberry, basswood
- Bladdernut, American prickly-ash
- Wild columbine, ebony spleenwort, maidenhair spleenwort

### SPECIES OF CONSERVATION CONCERN

- Rare sedges, ferns, and wildflowers
- Northern hairstreak (butterfly)
- Timber rattlesnake, worm snake, copperhead
- Southern red-backed vole, longtail shrew, porcupine, fisher, bobcat
- Blackburnian warbler, worm-eating warbler

These are just a few of the species of regional or statewide conservation concern that are known to occur in crest, ledge, and talus habitats. See Kiviat & Stevens (2001) for a more extensive list.



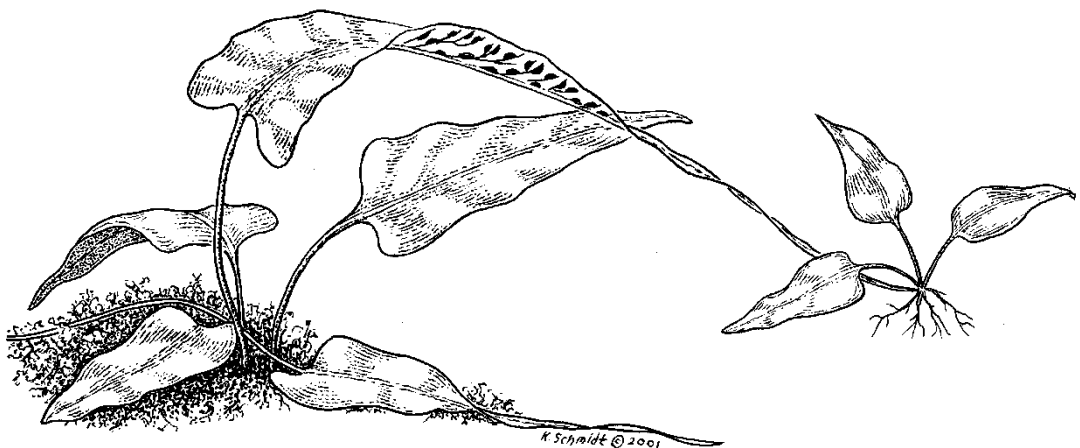
Purple-stemmed cliffbrake

## THREATS TO CREST, LEDGE, AND TALUS HABITAT

Rocky crests are popular sites for recreational uses, communication towers, and even houses. **Construction of trails, roads, and buildings** destroys rocky habitats directly and causes fragmentation of these habitats and the forested areas of which they are a part. Rare plants of crests are vulnerable to **trampling** and **collecting**. Rare snakes are susceptible to road mortality, intentional killing, and collecting. Rare breeding birds of crests are easily disturbed by human activities nearby. The shallow soils of these habitats are vulnerable to **erosion** from construction and logging activities, and **compaction** from foot and ATV traffic.

### CONSERVATION RECOMMENDATIONS

- ❖ Minimize construction of new roads and buildings on and near rocky ridges and hillsides.
- ❖ Protect crest, ledge, and talus areas from disturbances associated with high intensity human recreation, including soil compaction, trampling of sensitive plants, and disturbance of animals.
- ❖ Maintain intact habitats in the areas between crest, ledge, and talus locations to allow for dispersal of plant and animal populations.
- ❖ Avoid direct disturbance to dens of timber rattlesnake and other snakes of conservation concern, and restrict logging to the winter months when the snakes are hibernating.
- ❖ Consult with the Endangered Species Unit of the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation about any activity proposed in the vicinity of a timber rattlesnake habitat.



Walking fern

#### References

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- Fitch, H.S. 1960. Autecology of the copperhead. University of Kansas publication. Museum of Natural History 13:85-288.
- Kiviat, E. and G. Stevens. 2001. Biodiversity assessment manual for the Hudson River estuary corridor. New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, Albany. 508 p.