



# Windswept Alpine Ridge

*State Rank S1*

## Community Description

Matted evergreen shrubs and a few herbs are scattered among boulders or in bedrock pockets in an open alpine setting. Cushions of diapensia are the dominant feature, and alpine bilberry is typically common as well. The cover of herb species is usually <20%, and graminoids such as Bigelow's sedge and highland rush are typically more abundant than forbs. Older mats of diapensia may exhibit dieback.

## Soil and Site Characteristics

Sites occur on very exposed and windswept areas above treeline, with plants growing in gravelly substrate among fractured rocks. Slopes are flat to gentle.

## Diagnostics

Diapensia is the dominant species with >20% cover.

## Similar Types

Dwarf Heath - Graminoid Alpine Ridge can occur at similar elevations and can grade into this type, but

diapensia, if present, is sparse (< 20% cover). Bilberry - Mountain-heath Alpine Snowbanks similarly lack extensive diapensia. Subalpine Heath Krummholz and Crowberry - Bilberry Summit Balds lack diapensia and other strictly alpine species and generally occur at lower elevations.

## Conservation, Wildlife, and Management Considerations

This type is restricted even within the alpine zone and is very sensitive to hiker impacts. Because the vegetation is characteristically sparse and often occurs on flats, it is easy for hikers to wander off trail. The documented Maine sites occur on public lands or private



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conservation lands, where hiker impacts are the main management concern.

Mt. Katahdin is the only known nesting area in the state for the American pipit, which uses a variety of natural community types above treeline.

## Distribution

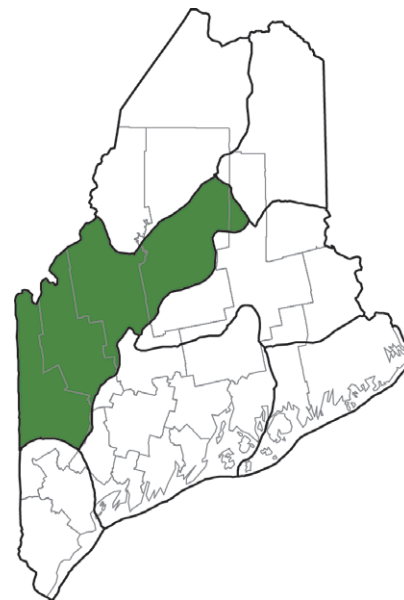
Restricted to Maine's highest mountains (New England - Adirondack Province), extending west to New Hampshire and along the Appalachians, and possibly northeastward to the Gaspé Peninsula.

Landscape Pattern: Small Patch



*Cutler's Goldenrod*

## Location Map



Community is known from this Ecoregion  
 Community may occur in this Ecoregion  
 Bailey's Ecoregion  
 County



*Diapensia*

## Characteristic Plants

These plants are frequently found in this community type. Those with an asterisk are often diagnostic of this community.

### Dwarf Shrub

- Alpine azalea
- Alpine bearberry
- Alpine bilberry\*
- Black crowberry
- Diapensia\*

### Herb

- Bigelow's sedge
- Boreal bentgrass
- Highland rush
- Mountain sandwort
- Northern firmoss
- Three-toothed cinquefoil

### Bryoid

- Cetraria lichen

## Associated Rare Plants

- Alpine bearberry
- Alpine sweet-grass
- Bearberry willow
- Bigelow's sedge
- Boreal bentgrass
- Cutler's goldenrod
- Diapensia
- Lapland rosebay
- Mountain sandwort
- Northern firmoss

## Associated Rare Animals

- American pipit

## Examples on Conservation Lands You Can Visit

- Mt. Abraham - Franklin Co.
- Mt. Katahdin, Baxter State Park - Piscataquis Co.
- Saddleback Mountain, Appalachian Trail - Franklin Co.