

Stoneface Trail

Shawnee National Forest

2 mile - Moderate Rating

Trailhead: 37.6612, -88.4381



Stoneface Research Natural Area is named after a prominent rock feature that looks like the head of an old man. Within the Shawnee National Forest in Saline County, this site is easy to access and close to Harrisburg, Illinois. It is one of ten Research Natural Areas in the Shawnee National Forest. This special designation means this area contains one of the finest examples of natural ecosystems and is set aside for the purposes of scientific study and education and for maintenance of biological diversity.

Stoneface is located in the Eagle Mountains, which is an escarpment created by the Shawneetown Fault system. The escarpment is a prominent feature because it rises abruptly from the flat valley, which was a large lake during post-glacial times. In addition to Stoneface, two other natural areas occur along this escarpment; north of Stoneface is Cave Hill Ecological Area and south of Stoneface is Dennison Hollow Research Natural Area.

From Harrisburg, take Highway 145 south. Turn left (east) on Whitesville Road (Route 5) and follow to Stoneface Road. The entrance road to the small parking lot is on the right. Follow the trail from the parking lot to the cliff edge. At the trail split, follow the trail to the left which will lead north along

the base of the escarpment. In less than a half mile the trail continues up the rock face to the top of the bluff. This climb can be challenging for some, but the views from the top are rewarding. Be sure to notice the succulent plant along the cliffs; it is a rare kind of Sedum called American orpine.

Once on top of the bluff, go right and follow the trail south. Many species of dry-adapted plants grow on the sandstone such as pencil flower, blazing star, and wild quinine. Upon reaching the powerline cut, you can turn around and go back the way you came or continue across the clearing. The trail will descend the bluff and turn to the right (north) to take you back to the parking lot.

Notable wildflowers present at site

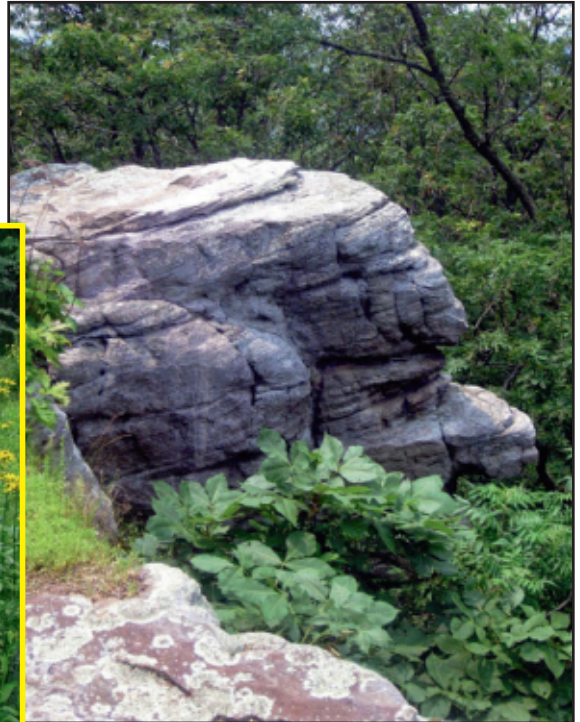
Blazing star
Liatris squarrosa

Goat's rue
Tephrosia virginiana

Indian pink
Spigelia marilandica

Starry campion
Silene stellata

Wild quinine
Parthenium integrifolium



Stonface (above). Yellow wingstem (left)