

**The  
Common  
Lichens  
of the  
Sunset Rock  
Area**

**TACONIC STATE PARK  
Copake Falls, NY**

## The Lichens of the Sunset Park Area- Taconic State Park

There are many lichens to be found along the pathways and trails in the Sunset Rocks Area of the Taconic State Park. It is a unique mountain top ecosystem consisting of mixed hardwoods and conifers, and evergreen shrubs like Mountain Laurel. The higher altitude and lower temperatures keeps the trees from getting very tall despite getting reasonably old. These older but shorter trees are a great place to locate well established lichens. The secluded area has been relatively undisturbed for a long time and the lichens have had a chance to prosper.

Some of the lichens will be found on tree trunks and tree branches. Some will be found on open rock surfaces and others will be found in the grasses and mosses along the ground in clearings in the woods and along the trails.

The following 20 lichens are only a fractional representation of the total lichens that exist in this area. However, these 20 lichens are some of the most common lichens and will be most noticeable along the trails. They are all likely to be found without wandering far of the main paths.

There are many more lichens to be found in this area, but some lichens are difficult to separate at the species level without chemical tests or microscopic examination. The lichens listed here should be able to be identified without any more than a hand lens.

All of these lichens shown here were located along the path up, the right hand upper path to Sunset Rocks and the actual pathway down to Sunset Rocks. All but one of these lichens were located within 1 meter of the actual trail and should be clearly visible from the trail. Only *Phaeophyscia rubropulchra* was located about 6 meters off the trail in the shaded woods section of the upper trail. It was on the back side of the tree facing away from the path and could not be seen from the path.

Many of the lichens were found on the open rocks and on the ground along the pathway. Despite much human and other native animal traffic, they continue to survive where they are. They are opportunists and can be found under your feet as you walk up the paths.

On your next walk in this area, look up, down and all around and you will notice an amazing collection of varied lichens. Enjoy your next walk and consider the enormous collection of lichens that hide in plain sight of the casual observer. Look everywhere, you will be astonished on what you will find.

# The Lichens of the Sunset Rock Area-TACONIC STATE PARK

## Foliose LICHENS on Trees

***Flavoparmelia caperata*, Common Green Shield:** is a medium to large **foliose** lichen in the **Parmeliaceae** family. **Key**

**Identifying features:** light gray or yellow-green color with noticeable wrinkles toward the center. Large lobes often with smaller *lobules* on the edge.

**Sample location:** this is the most common lichen in the area and will be found on tree bark of all kinds along the paths.



***Hypogymnia physodes*, Hooded Tube Lichen:** is a small to medium **foliose** lichen in the **Parmeliaceae** family. **Key**

**identifying features:** Light gray color, flaring at the tips. The lobes tend to be curled up somewhat at the tip, often with small mounds of white *soredia* under tip. **Sample location:** on trees of all kinds along the path up to the upper path to Sunset Rocks.



***Usnocetraria oakesiana*, Yellow-green Ribbon Lichen:** is a small to medium **foliose** lichen in the **Parmeliaceae** family. **Key**

**Identifying features:** light yellow-green lobes have a ruffled appearance. The lobes toward the center usually have noticeable white to light-green powdery *soredia* along the edges. **Sample Location:** on hardwood on the leftside of the path down to Sunset Rocks.



# The Lichens of the Sunset Rock Area-TACONIC STATE PARK

## Foliose LICHENS on Trees

***Parmelia sulcata*, Hammered Shield Lichen:** is a medium to large *foliose* lichen in the *Parmeliaceae* family. **Key**

**identifying features:** look for light gray strap-like lobes with the appearance of hammered metal, lobes often browned at the tips. **Sample location:** in trees of all kinds along the paths, especially main path up the hill.



***Physcia stellaris*, Star Rosette Lichen:** is a small *foliose* lichen in the *Parmeliaceae* family. **Key**

**identifying features:** Light gray strap-shaped radiating lobes, tight to the surface often wrapping around small branches. Numerous dark *apothecia* with light color margins. **Sample location:** common lichen in trees near Sunset Rocks in the sun.



***Punctelia rudecta*, Rough Speckled Shield Lichen:** is a small to medium *foliose* lichen in the *Parmeliaceae* family. **Key**

**identifying features:** look for medium gray to blue-gray lobes, often with brownish tips and a distinctive salted appearance created by the white *isidia* scattered on the lobe surface. **Sample Location:** on tree bark of all kinds along the path up to Sunset Rocks.

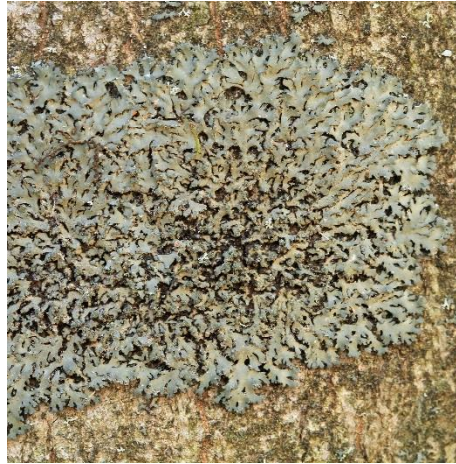


# The Lichens of the Sunset Rock Area-TACONIC STATE PARK

## Foliose LICHENS on Trees

***Phaeophyscia rubropulchra***, Orange Cored Lichen: is a small lichen in the *Parmeliaceae* family.

**Key identifying features:** look on the shady side of the tree for a small dark gray lichen. To confirm, scratch the surface or look for damage to see if the inner color is orange. **Sample Location:** shady side of maple trees along the upper path, a few meters off the path.



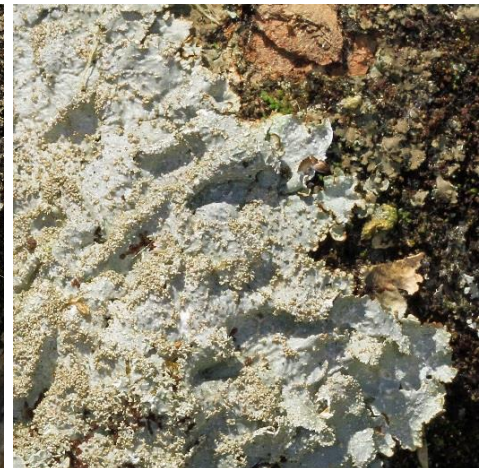
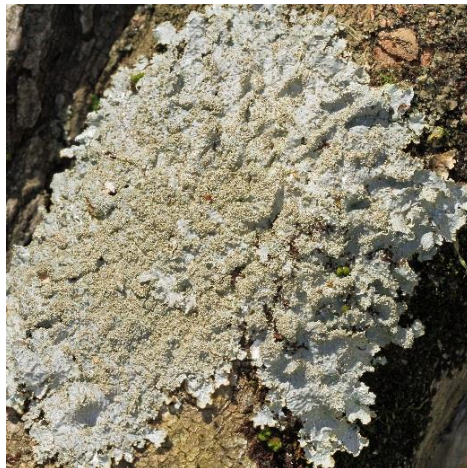
***Platismatia tuckermanii***, Crumpled Rag Lichen: is a small *foliose* lichen in the *Parmeliaceae* family. **Key identifying features:** Look for irregular, crumpled pale gray lobes, without *isidia* but with dark brown edges from black *pycnidia* and a mottled brown to black lower surface turning white at edges. **Sample location:** along upper path on a Mountain Laurel tree branch.

**Key identifying features:** Look for irregular, crumpled pale gray lobes, without *isidia* but with dark brown edges from black *pycnidia* and a mottled brown to black lower surface turning white at edges. **Sample location:** along upper path on a Mountain Laurel tree branch.



***Imshaugia aleurites***, Salted Starburst Lichen: is a small *foliose* lichen in the *Parmeliaceae* Family. **Key identifying features:** white to light gray lobes covered with shiny brownish cylindrical *isidia*, often with an appearance of a pile of beach sand in the center of the lichen. **Sample location:** on conifer bark in woods along paths to Sunset Rocks.

**Key identifying features:** white to light gray lobes covered with shiny brownish cylindrical *isidia*, often with an appearance of a pile of beach sand in the center of the lichen. **Sample location:** on conifer bark in woods along paths to Sunset Rocks.



# The Lichens of the Sunset Rock Area-TACONIC STATE PARK

## Fruticose LICHENS on Trees

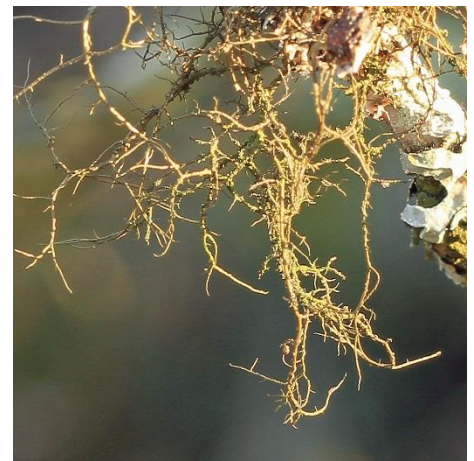
***Evernia mesomorpha*, Boreal Oakmoss Lichen:** is a small *fruticose* lichen in the *Parmeliaceae*

family. **Key identifying features:** look for a small light yellow-green tuft made up of very irregular shaped branches covered with coarse granular *soredia*. **Sample location:** In trees of all kinds, conifers and hardwoods, along the upper path, especially common in the Mountain Laurel.



***Bryoria furcellata*, Burred Horsehair Lichen:** is a small *fruticose* lichen in the *Parmeliaceae*

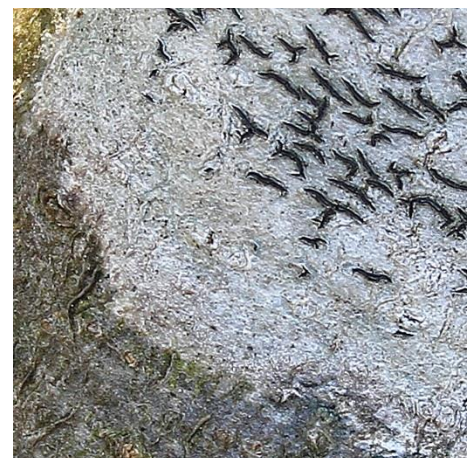
family. **Key identifying features:** This lichen looks much like a small mass of dark brown animal hair stuck on a branch. Close examination with a 10x hand lens should find small pointed *isidia* projections along the hair-like branches. **Sample location:** in Mountain Laurel branches along the upper path.



## Crustose LICHENS on Trees

***Graphis scripta*, Common Script Lichen:** is a *crustose* lichen in the *Graphidaceae* family. **Key**

**identifying features:** This lichen looks almost like pencil scribbles on white paint on the tree. The small black *lirelae* are pointed on both ends. **Sample location:** this is a very common lichen on small hardwoods along the upper paths. It grows close to the ground on smooth bark.



# The Lichens of the Sunset Rock Area-TACONIC STATE PARK

## Crustose LICHENS on Trees

***Ochrolechia arborea*, Powdery Saucer Lichen:** is a *crustose* lichen in the *Ochrolechiaceae* family. **Key identifying features:** look for small white, rather smooth circular patches with small clumps of greenish yellow *soredia*. **Sample location:** on smooth bark of hardwoods along the upper path to Sunset Rocks.



***Lecanora strobilina*, Mealy Rim Lichen:** is a *crustose* lichen in the *Lecanoraceae* family. **Key identifying features:** look for a light color patch on a tree with waxy, yellow-green *apothecia* with a powdery or granular rim the same color as the *thallus*. **Sample location:** on smooth bark of hardwoods along the upper path to Sunset Rocks.



## Foliose LICHENS on Rocks

***Xanthoparmelia conspersa*, Peppered Rock Shield:** is a *foliose* lichen in the *Parmeliaceae* family. **Key identifying features:** Look for gray lobed lichens on rocks with the center often covered with sparse to dense shiny gray *isidia*. The key to *X. conspersa* is a black lower surface. If tan or brown, it is *X. plittii*. **Sample location:** on rocks in the upper pathway to Sunset Rocks.



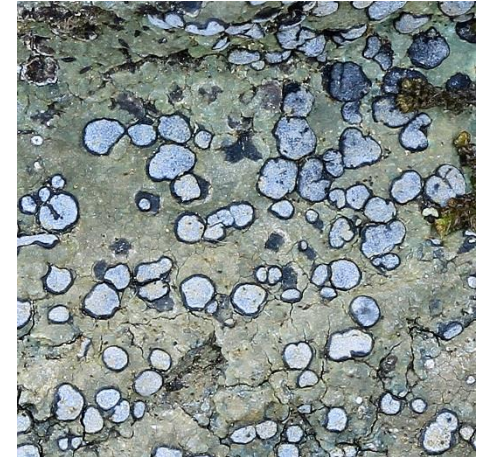
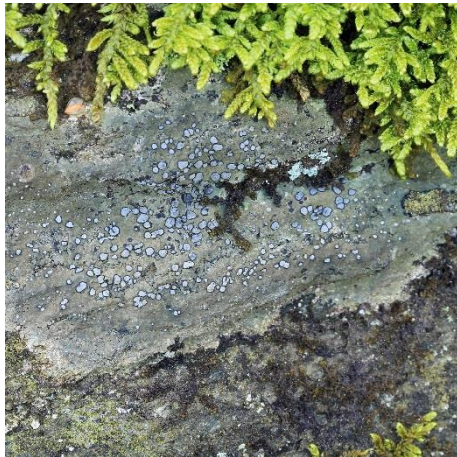
# The Lichens of the Sunset Rock Area-TACONIC STATE PARK

## **Foliose** LICHENS on Rocks

***Lepraria neglecta, (L. zonata)***, Zoned Dust Lichen: is a *crustose* lichen found on rocks. **Key identifying features:** A blue gray granular or dusty looking rock lichen with distinctive rings of darker brownish color formed in the center. **Sample location:** on rocks on the side of the uphill path just before the upper path to Sunset Rocks.



***Porpida albocaerulescens***, Smokey-eye Boulder Lichen: is a *crustose* lichen found on *siliceous* rocks. **Key identifying features:** this lichen has gray smoky looking *apothecia* with a black margin. This is one of the most common rock dwelling *crustose* lichens found in shady habitats. **Sample location:** on mostly shady rocks on path way up near top path.



## **Fruticose** LICHENS on Ground

***Cetraria arenaria***, Sand-loving Iceland Lichen: is a *fruticose* lichen found growing directly on the ground. **Key identifying features:** this is a dark gray to olive-brown lichen growing in sandy locations on the ground. It is often difficult to see unless you look very carefully. **Sample location:** in sand and grass on the right side of the upper path toward Sunset Rocks.





# The Lichens of the Sunset Rock Area-TACONIC STATE PARK

## *Fruticose* LICHENS on Ground

***Cladonia chlorophaea*, Mealy Pixie-cup Lichen:** is a small *fruticose* lichen found growing directly on the ground or on rotted wood. **Key identifying features:** light green to gray funnel shaped cups covered with a granular or powdery **soredia**. Cups gradually taper over the length. **Sample location:** on the moss covered sides of the upper level path.



***Cladonia uncialis*: Thorn Lichen:** is a *fruticose* lichen in the *Cladoniaceae* family found growing in mosses directly on the ground. **Key identifying features:** smooth light greenish-yellow to pale-yellow cushions with noticeable divergent and sharp **thorny** brown tips on the stalks. **Sample location:** in moss along the upper path to Sunset Rocks.

