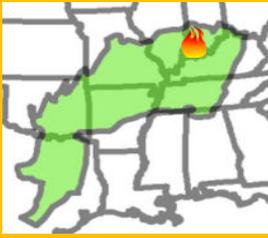


# Boone Creek Barrens

## FIRE SCIENCE HOT SPOTS



In this feature, we bring into focus fire science on-the-ground

At the [Boone Creek Barrens](#) in the Hoosier National Forest in southern Indiana, prescribed fire is used to maintain several rare barrens natural communities. Often steep and rocky, barrens are fire dependent; they typically have widely spaced, stunted trees and prairie-like groundcover. Elsewhere on the Hoosier, fire suppression has resulted in maple and beech gaining dominance (top-left image), with these shade-loving species in some places overtaking oaks and hickories, which historically dominated Indiana forests. But, due to restoration efforts, oaks prevail once again in the Boone Creek Barrens, including species less common nearby, like blackjack and post oak. Here, some 855 acres have been burned every three to five years since 2003. Use of prescribed fire (top-right image) promotes open woodlands (bottom-left image) where sufficient sunlight comes through the barrens' canopy for groundcover to thrive (bottom-right image).



In spring and summer, the barrens bloom with colorful wildflowers, such as blazing star (*Liatrix spicata*), white wild indigo (*Baptisia alba*), and downy phlox (*Phlox pilosa*, bottom-right inset). The barrens provide habitat for bird species of concern, including ruffed grouse (*Bonasa umbellus*) and yellow-breasted chat (*Icteria virens*). The wide variety of plants also support a number of pollinators, such as moths, skippers, and butterflies, including the painted lady (*Vanessa cardui*, bottom-left inset). Some insect species new

to science have been discovered in these barrens. Uncommon plants found here include rattlesnake master (*Eryngium yuccifolium*), winged elm (*Ulmus alata*), low-bush blueberry (*Vaccinium angustifolium*), and big bluestem (*Andropogon gerardii*). Click on each photo for a full-size downloadable image, or view all [HERE](#). Photo credits: Top-left and top-right: Jarred Brooke; bottom-right, bottom-left and flower inset: Denise Vaughn; butterfly inset: Hoosier National