



# Strangmoor Bog

The Unique Formation of  
Seney's Natural National Landmark

*Photo of a Strangmoor Bog, or String Bog, Seney NWR Schoolcraft County. Photo Courtesy of Josh Cohn—MNFI*

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*Seney National Wildlife Refuge, Schoolcraft County* - Landmarks are a way to mark our path – easily recognizable, they prevent us from getting lost. From signs on a well-worn trail to the corner store in your neighborhood, landmarks can point us in the right direction. Landmarks are also how we mark our cultural identity and celebrate our past. We can erect a stature to honor a famous person's work or build a monument to remind us of an important event. Landmarks - based on location or time - help us find our way.

## **The National Natural Landmark Program**

Natural landmarks are just as crucial and important for marking our paths and history, but instead of humans building a statue or monument to commemorate something, nature has already built them. Through the National Natural Landmarks Program, the federal government recognizes and cares for natural landmarks, sites that contain rare geological features or plant and animal life.

The Secretary of the Interior designates these natural landmarks based on a number of traits: diversity, character, value to science and education, condition and rarity. Once designated, the National Park Service administers the program, collaborating with landowners and other partners to conserve the nation's natural heritage.

**“The patterned peat bog within the National Natural Landmark at Seney marks the southern limit of patterned bogs in North America and is the largest and most striking example in Michigan and the Lower 48 states..”**

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## The U.P.'s Natural Landmark – Strangmoor Bog

The Seney National Wildlife Refuge is home to such a national treasure. The Seney National Natural Landmark is 10,262 acres and is within the portion of the refuge designated as federal Wilderness. The Seney Wilderness Area is the second largest wilderness area in Michigan, and it includes habitats for bald eagles, moose, coyotes, foxes, black bears, and rare gray wolves, among other animals.

### The Formation of Strangmoor Bog

The entire region around Seney and the Central Upper Peninsula is a large, almost level sand plain. A continuous peat layer of barely decomposed plant materials covers the sand. The sand plain was produced by deposition of glacial outwash from the last ice age. The small sand knolls that dot the flat plain are “extinct” sand dunes which likely formed about 9,500 year ago.



Strangmoor Bog. Photo Courtesy of The Nature Conservancy

Researchers began to notice the distinct patterning of this area from aerial photographs in the 1960's. The pattern is one of conspicuous banding of wetlands with many small circular dark areas (small pine areas on the old dunes).

Between the thin linear areas of bog forest are long winding ribbons of gray-green which are the treeless bogs. To be a true “Strangmoor” the string bogs consist of low bog ridges (termed strings) and wet sedge hollows (termed flarks). The ridges and hollows are oriented across the major slope of the peatland and at right angles to the flow of water. The vegetation of these Strangmoor areas places them between a bog and a fen and now are usually called “patterned fens.”

It is because this area is so remote – not near any roads – that it escaped much of the devastation of the logging boom era and has remained in very good condition. The best way to see this fen is from a plane or a long, wet hike off road. While designated a federal wilderness, the area is truly remote and little visited.

One notable feature of all “Strangmoor” or patterned peatlands is that decomposition within them often takes place very slowly. So, when a body falls into a peat bog, whether it be the body of

an animal or a human, it can be preserved virtually intact for long periods of time--sometimes for thousands of years. Partly because of this feature the Seney Strangmoor was featured in a Michael Carrier 2015 murder-mystery novel entitled *Murders in Strangmoor Bog*.

The bog will continue to provide habitat for many plants and animals and it plays an important role as a sponge and filter for waters headed to Lake Michigan. The remote nature and undisturbed features plus the unusual look and chemistry of the bog will continue to provide opportunities for solitude and mystery.

### More Information

<https://www.nps.gov/subjects/nlandmarks/index.htm>

<https://www.nps.gov/subjects/nlandmarks/site.htm?Site=STBO-MI>

<http://www.smithsonianmag.com/travel/seney-national-wildlife-refuge-180952579/#U5bcgGPzaJhOy6Pj.99>

<http://www.carnivorous--plants.com/pitcher-plant.html>

[https://www.amazon.com/dp/B012778N7K/ref=dp-kindle-redirect?\\_encoding=UTF8&btcr=1](https://www.amazon.com/dp/B012778N7K/ref=dp-kindle-redirect?_encoding=UTF8&btcr=1)