



Northern Polar Dune Field

ESP_o27378_2540

These dunes, known as barchan dunes, usually form where there is a moderate supply of sand and a prevailing wind direction. The “arms” or “horns” of barchan dunes point in the downwind direction and in this case indicate that the prevailing winds blow towards the east. The dunes in the close-up image are approximately 100 meters across and are traversing a bumpy, hard terrain. Polygonal patterns are evident in some areas while numerous meter-scale boulders are strewn throughout the region.

The HIRISE camera onboard the Mars Reconnaissance Orbiter is the most powerful one of its kind ever sent to another planet. Its high resolution allows us to see Mars like never before, and helps other missions choose a safe spot to land for future exploration. Thousands of images are available online at: uahirise.org.