



# Northeastern Bulrush

## *Scirpus ancistrochaetus*

Northeastern bulrush puzzles biologists. A wetland plant first identified as a distinct species in 1962, it is considered a relict species, one that was once more widespread. Occurring in isolated areas scattered across seven states, northeastern bulrush is difficult to find and difficult to recognize.

**Relict - a persistent remnant of an otherwise extinct flora or fauna or kind of organism**

A leafy bulrush in the sedge family of plants, northeastern bulrush is tall, with narrow leaves and a drooping flower head with chocolate-brown florets. While it resembles some other leafy bulrushes, northeastern bulrush's flowers and seeds are structurally different.

Like other sedges, northeastern bulrush grows in wet areas – small wetlands, sinkhole ponds or wet depressions with seasonally fluctuating water levels. It may be found at the water's edge, in deep water or in just a few inches of water, and during dry spells there may be no water visible where the plant is growing. Northeastern bulrush appears to have adapted to regularly changing water levels, which may have given it an advantage over less tolerant plant species. But habitat alterations that make a site consistently drier or wetter could make life impossible for northeastern bulrush. Activities such as filling or ditching in a wetland can destroy or degrade this species' habitat and pose a threat.

Because it is not showy and not easily identified, little is known about the life history of northeastern bulrush. Biologists periodically monitor known

populations to gain information on the species and its habitat requirements, and have conducted field surveys to locate additional populations.

The goal of the northeastern bulrush recovery program is to protect and maintain the species and its habitat so it can eventually be removed from Endangered Species Act protection. That will be accomplished by preventing habitat destruction and deterioration at sites where the plant now grows and any additional locations as they are found. Biologists are also studying northeastern bulrush to determine its habitat requirements, reproductive strategy and genetic variability. This information will assist in designing appropriate conservation measures for it.

Protection for northeastern bulrush will depend on many partnerships among the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, state agencies, non-governmental organizations and private landowners. Working together, we can help this survivor remain in the 21st century.



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**According to the Endangered Species Act, endangered means a species is in danger of extinction throughout all or a significant portion of its range. Threatened means a species is likely to become endangered within the foreseeable future throughout all or a significant portion of its range.**

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413/253 8200  
<http://northeast.fws.gov>**

**Federal Relay Service  
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1 800/877 8339**

**U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service  
1 800/344 WILD  
<http://www.fws.gov>**

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**Northeastern bulrush is found in Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Pennsylvania, Vermont, Virginia and West Virginia.**