

Southern Appalachian Creature Feature Podcasts

Bunched arrowhead

Greetings and welcome to the Southern Appalachian Creature Feature.

What simply looks like a swampy patch of land beside a farm field in Henderson County was actually once home to the most endangered plant in western North Carolina.

Bunched arrowhead is currently known from only two counties in the entire world - Henderson County, North Carolina and Greenville County, South Carolina. It's a small plant, growing up to 30 centimeters tall, produces small white flowers in early summer and usually grows in flooded soils.

A reason for the plant's rarity comes from the fact that it lives in an incredibly rare habitat - Southern Appalachian bogs. The amount of bog acreage has declined dramatically over the past 200 years, largely the result of these typically flat areas being converted to other uses. Even among bog sites, as far as biologists know, the range of bunched arrowhead has always been extremely limited – just the counties where it is currently known, and Buncombe County, North Carolina, from which it seems to have long since disappeared.

The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service placed bunched arrowhead on the federal endangered species list in 1976, just three years after the Endangered Species Act was created. The greatest hope for recovering this plant lies in the restoration and protection of its habitat and the ability of botanists to propagate it in captivity for eventual reintroduction to suitable places in the wild.

For WNCW and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, this is Gary Peeples.