

# White Fringed Orchid

## *Platanthera blephariglottis*

### Description

White Fringed Orchid is an herbaceous perennial with a hairless stem that may grow to 2 feet (ca 0.6 m) in height. The leaves are elliptic to lance-shaped, to 8 inches (20 cm) in length and to 1 inch (2.5 cm) in width, pointed at the tip, untoothed on the margin, hairless, alternately arranged and sheathing the stem, and usually 1-3 in number with lowest leaf of the stem being the largest. The white flowers, appearing mostly in July and early August, occur in a cluster near the top of the stem. The most striking feature of the individual flower is the lower downward-pointing petal (called a “lip” in orchids), which is about 3/8 inch (8-11 mm) in length and has very delicately incised teeth or fringes along its margins. The back of this petal has a slender, tube-like projection (called a “spur” in orchids) about up to 1 inch (25 mm) in length that contains nectar and attracts pollinating insects.

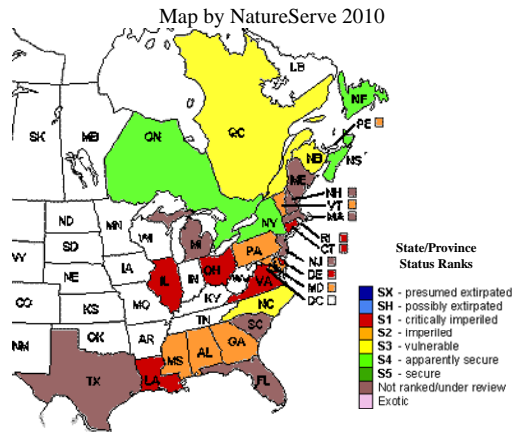


Photo source: Denise Watts (PNHP)

### Distribution & Habitat

White Fringed Orchid has a range from Canada southward to the Gulf Coast. In Pennsylvania, it has been documented historically mostly in the northeastern and northwestern glaciated counties. It grows in bogs, peaty wetlands and swamps, particularly on floating sphagnum moss mats surrounding bog pools.

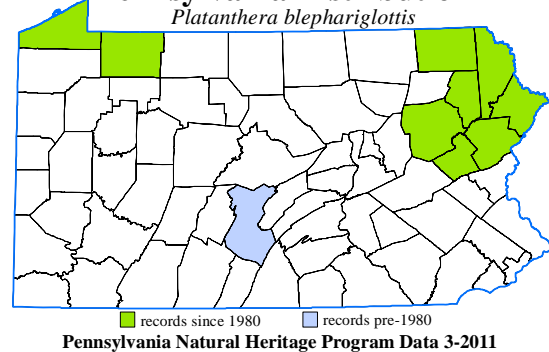
### North American State/Province Conservation Status



### Current State Status

The PA Biological Survey (PABS) considers White Fringed Orchid to be a species of special concern, based on the relatively few locations recently confirmed and the specialized habitat. It does not have a PA legal rarity status, but has been assigned a PABS suggested rarity status of Endangered.

### Pennsylvania Distribution



### Conservation Considerations

The viability of populations of White Fringed Orchid and its habitat may be enhanced by creating buffers and protecting the natural hydrology around wetlands and controlling invasive species. The beauty of the flowers makes them susceptible to digging and removal. This species is an indicator for bog habitats that feature various orchids, insectivorous plants such as sundew, bladderwort, and pitcher plant, and other interesting species.

### NatureServe conservation status ranks

**G4G5** – Globally secure; **S2S3** – Imperiled in Pennsylvania



### References

- NatureServe. 2011. NatureServe Explorer: An online encyclopedia of life [web application]. Version 7.1. NatureServe, Arlington, Virginia. Available at <http://www.natureserve.org/explorer>
- Pennsylvania Natural Heritage Program. 2011.
- Rhoads, A.F. and W.M. Klein, Jr. 1993. The Vascular Flora of Pennsylvania. American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.
- Rhoads, A.F. and T.A. Block. 2007. The Plants of Pennsylvania: An Illustrated Manual. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.