Cranefly Orchid
Tipularia discolor

Description
Cranefly Orchid is an upright perennial herb. Its single flowering stem grows from a swollen, bulb-like base and reaches 8 to 20 inches (2-5 dm) in height. The leaves are broadly oval and parallel veined. The leaf undersides are purple, while the upper surfaces are green and may have raised purple spots. Each plant has a solitary basal leaf that is only present in the fall and winter. The flowers are greenish-purple and consist of 3 petals and 3 sepals. A long spur extends from the back of the flower. Flowers are held along the upper potions of the flowering stem and bloom from July through August.

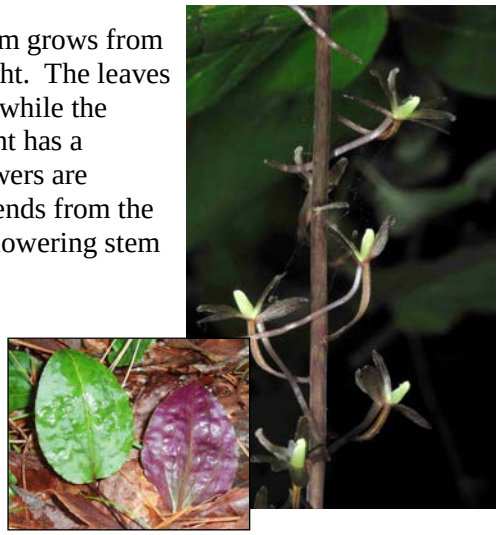
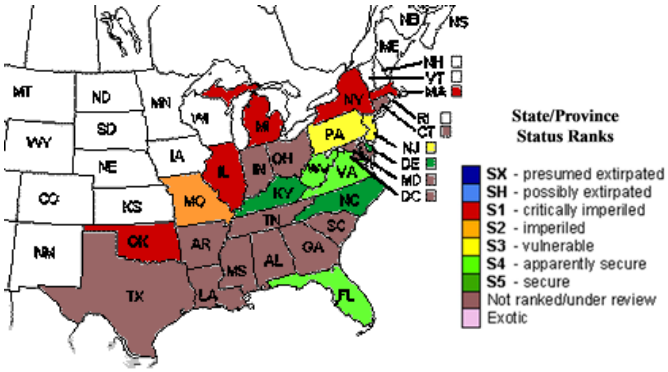


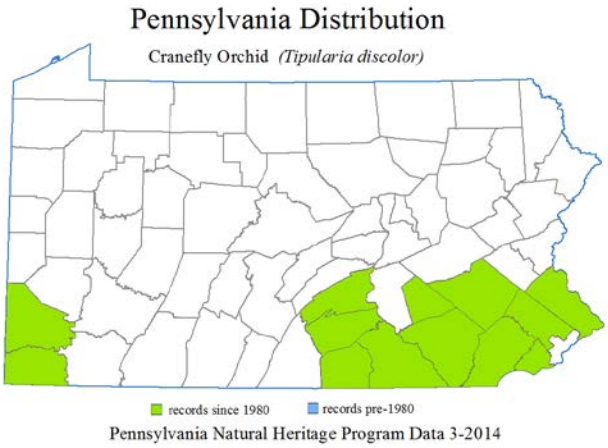
Photo source: S Ray-flowers; J. Kunsman -leaves (PNHP)

Distribution & Habitat
Cranefly Orchid occurs from New York and Massachusetts south to Florida, west to Michigan, and southwest to Texas. In Pennsylvania, it can be found mostly in the southeast where it grows in moist deciduous forests and along stream banks.

North American State/Province Conservation Status
Map by NatureServe 2014



Current State Status
Cranefly Orchid populations are threatened by the loss of their rich woodland habitat. These high quality woodlands may also be altered by encroachment of invasive species, over-browsing by deer, and fragmentation. Fragmentation can have a drying effect on the habitat and promote invasive species growth. It has a PA legal rarity status and a PABS suggested rarity status of Rare.



Conservation Considerations
Maintenance of known populations and preservation of the communities where Cranefly Orchid grows will be crucial to its survival. Creating buffers around fragmented habitat and removal of invasive species will help to maintain populations and encourage new population growth. The management of the known sites requires long term monitoring of populations. Potential sites for restoration should be evaluated.

NatureServe conservation status ranks
G4G5 – Globally Apparently Secure; **S3**– Vulnerable in Pennsylvania

References

- NatureServe. 2014. NatureServe Explorer: An online encyclopedia of life [web application]. Version 7.1. NatureServe, Arlington, Virginia. Available at http://www.natureserve.org/explorer
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- 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. 2nd edition. University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Pennsylvania Natural Heritage Program