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# Conserving South Carolina's At-Risk Species:

## *Species facing threats to their survival*

### Ravine sedge (aka—Impressed-nerve sedge)

(*Carex impressinervia*)



Ravine sedge/Keith Bradley

### Description

The ravine sedge is a perennial, grass-like herb forming dense clumps connected by underground stems or rhizomes. Flowering stems are 10 - 34 inches tall and yellow-brown. Leaf sheaths are hairless and greenish-white or light tan. Leaf blades are about 1/8 inch wide and smooth, except for a hairy mid-vein; the lower part of the leaf is a hairless, pale green or tan sheath encircling the base of the stem. Old, fibrous leaf bases persist at the base of the plant. The topmost flower spike is up to 1 1/2 inches long, solitary at the top of the flowering stem, and contains male flowers only. Lateral flower spikes are up to 1 3/4 inches long, with both female and male flowers, 2 - 4 spikes per stem, and are held below the male-flowered spike

on the same stem; each spike with 5 - 11 fruits. The fruit body is about 1/8 inch long with a short, bent stalk and sharply bent tip, tightly enclosed in a 3-sided, heavily veined sac. Few-fruited sedge (*Carex oligocarpa*) is a similar species that also forms dense clumps in rich forests but does not have old leaf bases persisting at the base of the plant. Also, its leaf sheaths are purple rather than light green. Ravine sedge, like most sedges, are wind-pollinated. Little is known about seed dispersal or other aspects of reproduction for this species.

### Range

Ravine sedge is currently known from approximately 25 disjunct sites in Alabama, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, and possibly Georgia. In South Carolina, the plant is known only from a small tributary to Cuffeytown Creek in Greenwood County where it occurs with Dwarf palmetto (*Sabal minor*) and Oglethorpe oak (*Quercus oglethorpensis*).

### Habitat

Ravine sedge occurs in vegetatively diverse moist to wet deciduous forests. It is usually found on gentle slopes above and in the floodplains of small streams, usually in areas with mafic (rich in magnesium and iron) or slate bedrock.

### Status

NatureServe's Rounded Global Status is G2 - Imperiled. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service was petitioned to list the species in April 2010 and in September 2011 issued a 90-day finding indicating listing may be warranted.

### Threats

With fewer than 10 occurrences ranked as having excellent or good viability, the species is threatened by land-use conversion,

habitat fragmentation, and certain forest management practices.

### Management/Protection Needs

Protect hardwood slope forests and floodplain forests from clearing, logging, and stream impoundment as the species tends to grow in transition zones between the floodplain and slope, making it particularly vulnerable to changes in water levels. Management primarily involves avoiding removal of the tree canopy and preventing any activity that would change the hydrology of the ravines. Exotic species that invade forested area may need to be controlled on some sites.



Ravine sedge/Bruce Sorrie

### References

Georgia Department of Natural Resources - Rare Plant Species Profiles: <http://georgiawildlife.com/speciesinfo/plants>

NatureServe. 2017. NatureServe Explorer: An online encyclopedia of life [web application]. Version 7.1. NatureServe, Arlington, Virginia. Available <http://explorer.natureserve.org>.

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