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Conserving South Carolina's At-Risk Species: *Species facing threats to their survival*

Carolina birds-in-a-nest

(*Macbridea caroliniana*)



Carolina birds-in-a-nest / L.L. Gaddy

Description

Carolina birds-in-a-nest is a low-growing (1-3 ft. tall) perennial herb with opposite leaves and square stems. Its stems and leaves have stalked glands. Flowers are terminal (rarely from the leaf axils), bilaterally symmetrical, pink to lavender, and approximately one inch long. After flowering, the sepals (nests) persist. The four small seeds that develop give the appearance of four birds (or four eggs) in a nest. Flowering/fruiting period for the plant is from mid-July to early September.

Range

Carolina birds-in-a-nest ranges from southeastern North Carolina to southern Georgia, with unconfirmed reports from Florida, Alabama, and Mississippi (LeBlond 2002). In South Carolina, the species is known from the following counties: Aiken, Allendale, Barnwell, Berkeley, Calhoun, Chesterfield, Colleton, Darlington, Dillon, Edgefield, Florence, Georgetown, Hampton, Horry, Jasper, Kershaw, Lexington, Marion, Orangeburg, Richland, and Williamsburg.

Habitat

The plant is an inhabitant of saturated and intermittently-flooded swamp forests of

blackwater stream floodplains; seepage forests associated with large brownwater (or redwater) floodplains; sandhill hillside seepage bogs; planted pine stands on organic blackwater floodplain soils; and disturbed sites such as roadsides, power-line rights-of-way, gas line rights-of-way and other sites associated with habitat types mentioned above.

Status

This species is not currently protected by the Endangered Species Act but it is listed as a "High Priority" in the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources' State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP) 2015. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) was petitioned in April 2010 to list the species. A 90-day finding published by the Service in September 2011 found that listing may be warranted.

Threats

Threats to the species include habitat alteration; indiscriminant herbicide use; and

competition from exotic and non-native species like the Asiatic dayflower (*Murdannia keisak*) and feral hog (*Sus scrofa*). Asiatic dayflower commonly invades blackwater swamp forests and colonizes organic bogs and bare mud flats where Carolina birds-in-a-nest is often present. Feral hogs (*Sus scrofa*) are also considered to be a major threat to Carolina birds-in-a-nest as feral hogs are known to root in seepage forests where Carolina birds-in-a-nest grows.

Management/Protection Needs

The species benefits from programs to preserve and enhance wetlands. Such programs should be encouraged for conservation of Carolina birds-in-a-nest. Continue to survey, monitor, and protect known populations. Expand survey work to identify new populations. Work with landowners in/near key Carolina birds-in-a-nest habitat to discourage the indiscriminant use of herbicides for right-of-way maintenance.



Carolina birds-in-a-nest habitat, forested floodplain of Congaree National Park; credit: Ken Lund, Flickr. <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.0/legalcode>



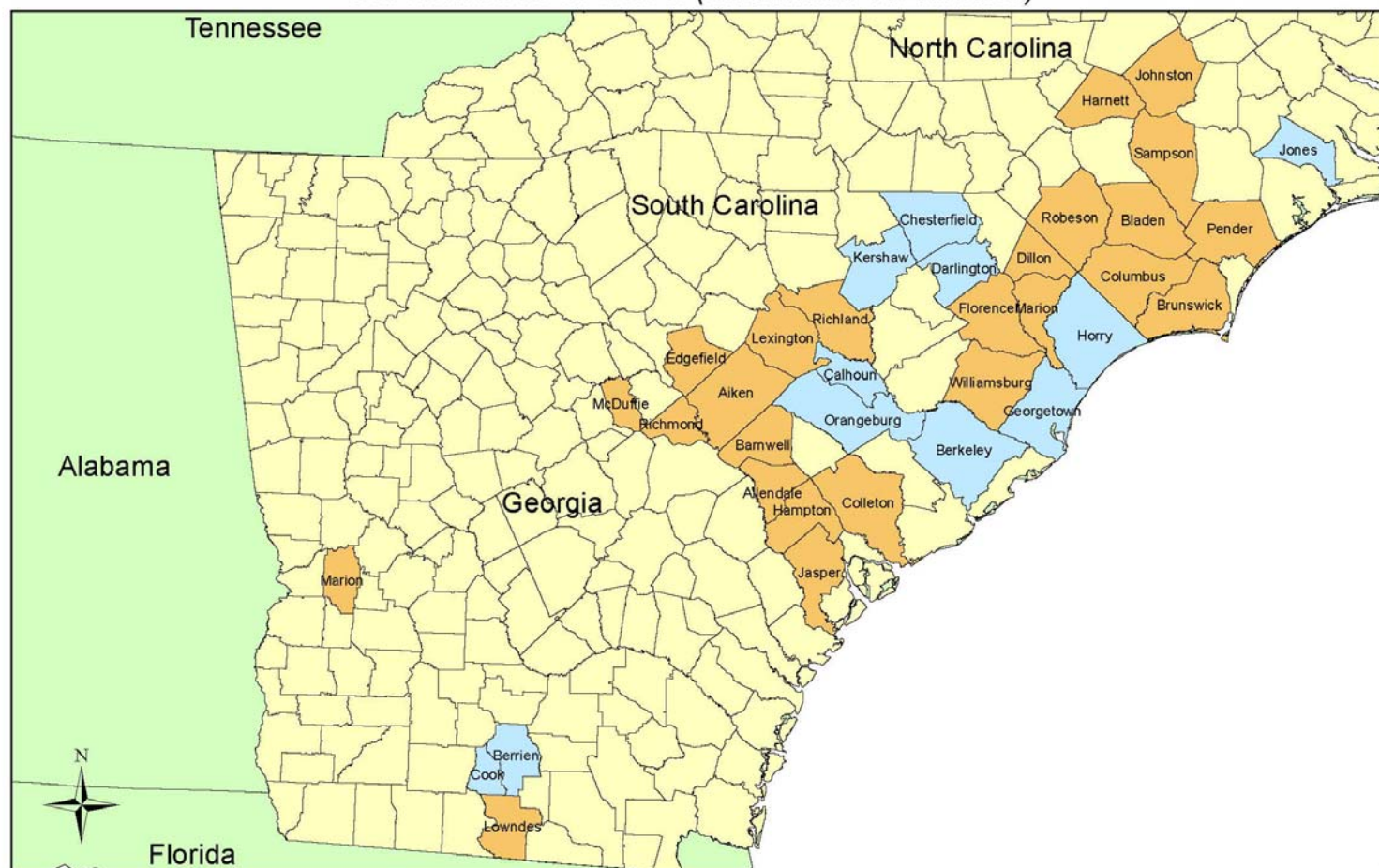
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Orange: Counties of Occurrence
Light Blue: Historic Counties of Occurrence

0 35 70 140 Miles
0 40 80 160 Kilometers

Map Publication: March 9, 2017



References

Gaddy, L.L., Status Update for *Macbridea caroliniana* (Carolina bog mint). 2015. Unpublished report, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, South Carolina Field Office, Charleston, S.C.

NatureServe. 2015. NatureServe Explorer: An online encyclopedia of life [web application]. Version 7.1. NatureServe, Arlington, Virginia. Available <http://explorer.natureserve.org>.

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