



**Common Name:** MONKEYFACE ORCHID

**Scientific Name:** *Platanthera integrilabia* (Correll) Luer

**Other Commonly Used Names:** white fringeless orchid

**Previously Used Scientific Names:** *Habenaria blephariglottis* (Willdenow) Hooker var. *integrilabia* Correll, *Habenaria correllii* Cronquist

**Family:** Orchidaceae (orchid)

**Rarity Ranks:** G2G3/S1S2

**State Legal Status:** Threatened

**Federal Legal Status:** Proposed threatened

**Federal Wetland Status:** OBL

**Description:** Perennial **herb** with an erect stem 20 - 32 inches (50 - 80 cm) tall, often in colonies of single-leaved, juvenile plants. **Leaves** 4  $\frac{3}{4}$  - 9 inches (12 - 23 cm) long and  $\frac{3}{8}$  - 1  $\frac{1}{4}$  inches (1 - 3.2 cm) wide, alternate; 2 - 3 large leaves, folded along a strong central vein, are at mid- to lower stem; 2 - 3 small, bract-like leaves are near the top of the stem. **Flowers** 6 - 15 in number, pure white, in a small cluster at the top of the stem. Two rounded **lateral sepals** droop down; one oval **upper sepal** overlaps with 2 **petals** to form a hood over the center of the flower. **Lip petal** about  $\frac{5}{8}$  inch (1 - 1.5 cm) long, spoon-shaped with slightly toothed (not fringed) margins. **Spur** 1  $\frac{3}{8}$  - 2  $\frac{3}{8}$  inches (3.5 - 6 cm) long, curved down behind the flower. **Fruit** a capsule,  $\frac{5}{8}$  -  $\frac{7}{8}$  inch (1.6 - 2.2 cm) long, with many tiny, dust-like seeds.

**Similar Species:** No other white-flowered species of *Platanthera* occurs in north Georgia. Monkeyface orchid often occurs with green woodland orchid (*Platanthera clavellata*), which has similar leaves but yellow-green flowers.

**Related Rare Species:** Nine species of *Platanthera* are rare in Georgia. See on this web site: southern white fringed orchid (*P. blephariglottis*), Chapman's fringed orchid (*P. chapmanii*), large purple fringed orchid (*P. grandiflora*), and purple fringeless orchid (*P. peramoena*).

**Habitat:** Seepage sphagnum bogs, springheads, seepy stream banks, red maple-black gum swamps. Often grows with primrose-leaved violet, green woodland orchid, cowbane, and grass-of-Parnassus.

**Life History:** Monkeyface orchid is pollinated by large butterflies, such as swallowtails, whose long tongues are adapted to probing the long, nectar-containing spur of *Platanthera* species. During the process of probing for nectar, sticky packets of pollen adhere to the front of the insects' heads and are brushed off onto the stigmas of flowers that are subsequently visited. Flowers must be cross-pollinated for fruit to set. The dust-like seeds are dispersed by wind and gravity.

**Survey Recommendations:** Surveys are best conducted during flowering (mid-July-late August).

**Range:** Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Kentucky; populations in North Carolina and Virginia have been destroyed.

**Threats:** Logging, off-road vehicles, development, canopy closure, overbrowsing by deer, digging by feral hogs, ditching and draining of wetlands, pollution and sedimentation into streams, and invasion by exotic pest plants such as kudzu.

**Georgia Conservation Status:** Eight extant populations are known, but most are decreasing in size and vigor, and all but one are on private land.

**Conservation and Management Recommendations:** Avoid logging, soil compaction by off-road vehicles, ditching, and draining in wetlands. Use fire and hand-clearing to create sunny openings and prevent woody species invasion. Protect streams from sedimentation and impoundment. Eradicate exotic pest plants and feral hogs.

**Selected References:**

- Brown, P.M. and S.N. Folsom. 2004. Wild orchids of the southeastern United States, north of peninsular Florida. University Press of Florida, Gainesville.
- Chafin, L.G. 2007. Field guide to the rare plants of Georgia. State Botanical Garden of Georgia and University of Georgia Press, Athens.
- FNA. 2003. Flora of North America, Vol. 26, Magnoliophyta: Liliidae: Liliales and Orchidales. Oxford University Press, New York.
- Kral, R. 1983. A report on some rare, threatened, or endangered forest-related vascular plants of the South. Technical Publication R8-TP2. United States Forest Service, Atlanta.
- Luer, C.A. 1975. The native orchids of the United States and Canada, excluding Florida. New York Botanical Garden, New York.
- McKeever, S. 2001. Some native orchids of the southeastern United States. *Tipularia* 16: 22-31.
- NatureServe. 2008. NatureServe Explorer. Arlington, Virginia.  
<http://www.natureserve.org/explorer>
- Patrick, T.S., J.R. Allison, and G.A. Krakow. 1995. Protected plants of Georgia. Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Natural Heritage Program, Social Circle.
- Ranger, L.S. 1994. Monkeying around: a rare orchid and its taxonomy. *Tipularia* 9: 7-13.
- USFWS. 2015. Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants; Threatened Species Status for *Platanthera integrilabia* (White Fringeless Orchid), A Proposed Rule by the Fish and Wildlife Service on 09/15/2015. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.  
<https://www.federalregister.gov/articles/2015/09/15/2015-22973/endangered-and-threatened-wildlife-and-plants-threatened-species-status-for-platanthera-integrilabia>
- Weakley, A.S. 2008. Flora of the Carolinas, Virginia, Georgia, northern Florida, and surrounding areas. University of North Carolina Herbarium, Chapel Hill.  
<http://www.herbarium.unc.edu/flora.htm>
- Zettler, L.W., N.S. Ahuja, and T.M. McInnis, Jr. 1996. Insect pollination of the endangered monkey-face orchid (*Platanthera integrilabia*) in McMinn County, Tennessee. *Castanea* 61(1): 14-24.
- Zettler, L. W., N. S. Ahuja, and T. M. McInnis, Jr. 1993. The pollination ecology of *Platanthera integrilabia* (Correll) Luer, an endangered terrestrial orchid. Abstract, Association of Southeastern Biologists Bulletin 40: 110-111.

Zettler, L. W. and J. E. Fairey, III. 1990. The status of *Platanthera integrilabia*, an endangered terrestrial orchid. *Lindleyana* 5: 212-217.

**Author of Species Account:** Linda G. Chafin

**Date Compiled or Updated:**

L. Chafin, July 2008: original account

K. Owers, Feb. 2010: added pictures

G. Krakow, Apr. 2016: updated federal legal status and USFWS reference

