



Common Name: OVATE CATCHFLY

Scientific Name: *Silene ovata* Pursh

Other Commonly Used Names: mountain catchfly, Blue Ridge catchfly

Previously Used Scientific Names: none

Family: Caryophyllaceae (pink)

Rarity Ranks: G3/S1S2

State Legal Status: Rare

Federal Legal Status: none

Federal Wetland Status: none

Description: Perennial **herb** up to 5 feet (150 cm) tall, with coarse, hairy, branching stems. **Leaves** 2 $\frac{3}{8}$ - 4 inches (6 - 10) long, oval with pointed tip and rounded base, roughly hairy on both surfaces, with 3 - 5 conspicuous veins and no leaf stalk, opposite. **Flowers** with 5 white petals about $\frac{1}{2}$ inch (1 - 1.5 cm) long, each deeply divided into 8 fringe-like segments; 3 styles and 10 stamens; and a tubular **calyx** with 10 conspicuous veins; flowers open in the evening. **Fruit** a narrow capsule about $\frac{3}{8}$ inch (7 - 8 mm) long, splitting into 6 sections.

Similar Species: Starry campion (*Silene stellata*) has similar flowers with deeply divided, white petals, but its mid-stem leaves are in whorls of 4; it flowers July–September.

Related Rare Species: Carolina catchfly (*Silene caroliniana*, Special Concern) is less than 10 inches tall; it has white to pink flowers, and its petals have only one shallow notch; it flowers April–July. Also see fringed campion (*S. polypetala*) and royal catchfly (*S. regia*) on this website.

Habitat: Rich, deciduous forests over limestone or amphibolite in the Coastal Plain and in Fall Line ravines. In the mountains, high-elevation, rocky, oak forests, usually over mafic rocks.

Life History: Ovate catchfly reproduces sexually as well as vegetatively by the spread of underground stems (rhizomes). The flowers open at night and are pollinated by moths which probe the flowers for nectar produced at the base of the stamens. They may also be pollinated by bees and butterflies as is the very similar starry campion (*Silene stellata*).

Survey Recommendations: Surveys are best conducted during flowering, late August–early November, with peak flowering in September.

Range: Georgia, north to Virginia and west to Arkansas and Mississippi.

Threats: Logging and clearing in hardwood forests. Overbrowsing by deer. Digging by feral hogs.

Georgia Conservation Status: Twelve populations are known, 9 of which have been seen in the last 20 years; 5 of these 9 are on public lands.

Conservation and Management Recommendations: Maintain hardwood canopy cover. Avoid clearing. Reduce the size of Georgia's deer herd. Eradicate feral hogs.

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