

Creeping Spikerush



Eleocharis fallax



Photo credits: *Richard Ring*

Scientific Name *Eleocharis ambigens*
Fern.

Family Name Cyperaceae
Sedge Family

Did you know?

The species name *fallax* is Latin for deceitful or deceptive and its common name in some states is deceitful spike-rush. This refers to its close relationship to other similar species and the difficulty of telling them apart (Flora of North America Editorial Committee 2002). Another of its common names, creeping spike-rush, is also used for the more common *Eleocharis palustris*.

Summary

Protection Endangered in New York State, not listed federally.

This level of state protection means: listed species are those with: 1) 5 or fewer extant sites, or 2) fewer than 1,000 individuals, or 3) restricted to fewer than 4 U.S.G.S. 7 ½ minute topographical maps, or 4) species listed as endangered by U.S. Department of Interior.

Rarity G4G5, S1

A global rarity rank of G4G5 means: Apparently or Demonstrably Secure globally - Uncommon to common in the world, but not rare; usually widespread, but may be rare in some parts of its range; possibly some cause for long-term concern due to declines or other factors. More information is needed to assign a single conservation status.

A state rarity rank of S1 means: This plant is endangered/critically imperiled in New York because of extreme rarity (typically 5 or fewer populations or very few remaining individuals) or is extremely vulnerable to extirpation from New York due to biological factors.

Conservation Status in New York

There are 2 existing very small populations which may be threatened by Phragmites and overuse of the surrounding wetlands. There are four occurrences from the early 1900s which have not been rediscovered.

Short-term Trends

Follow-up surveys have not been done to gather data about short-term trends.

Long-term Trends

This plant has always been very rare in New York but not enough data has been gathered to understand long-term trends.

Conservation and Management

Threats

Phragmites is a threat in the marshes where this occurs.

Conservation Strategies and Management Practices

Control Phragmites invasions in the salt marshes where it exists and prevent new incursions. Natural buffers should be established around the salt marshes to decrease pollution runoff and other direct human disturbances.

Research Needs

This species has had a confusing taxonomic history and herbarium specimens of all closely-related species should be examined to determine if more populations exist. Research could also be done to help augment existing populations.

Habitat

Only two New York sites with *Eleocharis fallax* have been described; one was an artificial, weedy wetland adjacent to a wastewater treatment plant, and the other an open wetland adjacent to small pond. More information on the habitat requirements of Creeping Spikerush in New York is needed (New York Natural Heritage Program 2010). Fresh to brackish pond and lakeshores, marshes (FNA 2002). Fresh and brackish swamps along the coast (Gleason and Cronquist 1991).

Associated Ecological Communities

Other Probable Associated Communities

Coastal plain pond
Coastal plain pond shore
Sewage treatment pond

Identification Comments

Spikerushes consist of a simple stem (the leaves bladeless and inconspicuous), with the inflorescence consisting of a solitary, many-scaled spikelet at the top of the stem. The perianth (sepals and petals), if present, is reduced to bristles. The base of the style is expanded into a tubercle, and is usually persistent on the fruit (achenes).

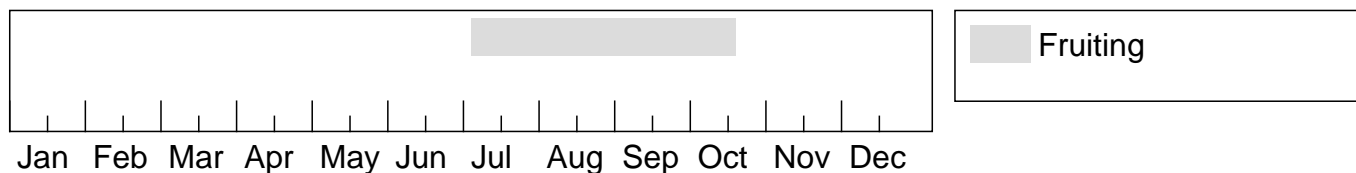
Eleocharis fallax is a perennial, mat-forming species with long rhizomes. The stems are round (often ridged in dry specimens), and 30 to 75 cm tall, with purplish bases. The leaf-sheaths are persistent with obtuse, firm, red tips. The spikelets are egg-shaped to rounded and 5 to 12 mm tall, and the floral scales are deciduous. There are 1 to 5, brown, stout, perianth bristles, unequal in length but none exceeding the achene. The achenes are either compressed 3-sided or thickly biconvex, with evident angles, and have an evidently pitted surface. The tubercles are whitish-brown, pyramid-shaped, and not depressed. (FNA 2002, Gleason and Cronquist 1991)

Best Life Stage for Identifying This Species

Specimens with complete stems and mature, intact fruits are needed for identification.

The Best Time to See

Creeping Spikerush's fruits mature in July and persist into October.



The time of year you would expect to find Creeping Spikerush in New York.

Taxonomy

Kingdom Plantae

└ Phylum Anthophyta

└ Class Monocots (Monocotyledoneae)

└ Order Cyperales

└ Family Cyperaceae (Sedge Family)

Additional Common Names

Spikerush

Synonyms

Eleocharis fallax (Weatherby)

Additional Resources

Links

NatureServe Explorer

<http://natureserve.org/explorer/servlet/NatureServe?searchName=ELEOCHARIS+FALLAX>

Google Images

<http://images.google.com/images?q=ELEOCHARIS+FALLAX>

USDA Plants Database

<http://1.usa.gov/xRSf9X>

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