



*Rare Beauty:  
Volunteers Monitor Swamp Pink*



Citizens United, a local watershed organization in southern New Jersey, works in cooperation with the federal government to protect a rare species, swamp pink.

*Swamp pink in bloom*



Swamp pink lily, (*Helonias bullata*) a federally threatened and state endangered species, is one of the most unique and beautiful wildflowers of the Eastern United States.

**Identification:** *The flower cluster is an explosion of bright pink flowers dotted with blue anthers*

**Blooms:** *April or early May*

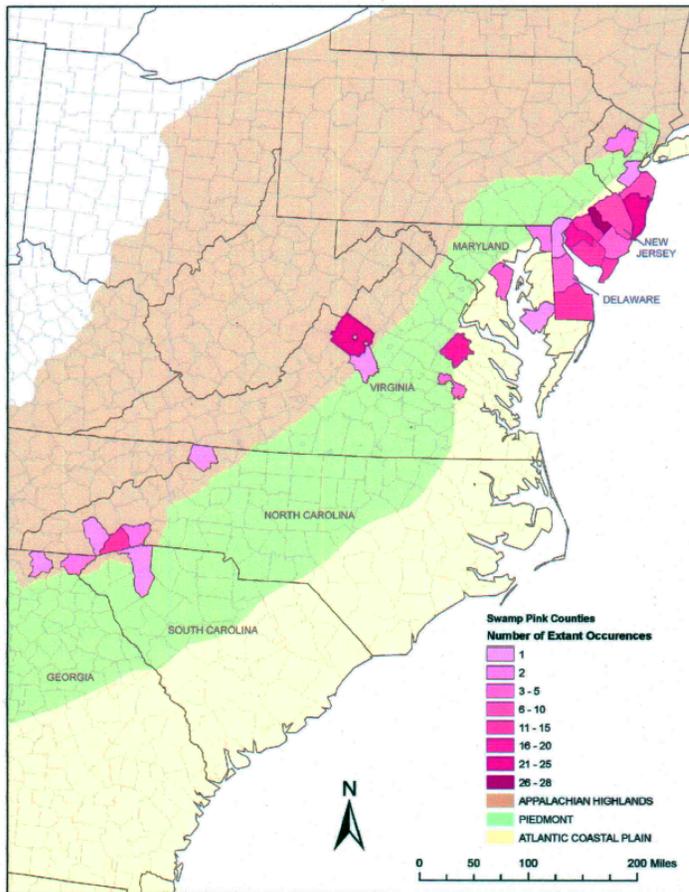


Figure 1. Counties with extant occurrences of swamp pink

This species historically ranged from Staten Island, New York, to the southern Appalachian Mountains. The largest percentage of extant groups is found in New Jersey.

Many historical populations in New Jersey and New York have been confirmed extirpated (destroyed). Many of New Jersey's extant (existing) populations have declined in both numbers of plants and in plant vigor.

***Distribution: Current range of swamp pink***



Although recent intensive surveys have resulted in the discovery of more extant populations, the number of high-ranking sites has declined significantly.

***Additional Physical Characteristics: Smooth, evergreen, lance-shaped leaves in a basal rosette that often attain a purplish tint as the plant matures***



Intrinsic or natural threats: Swamp pink is threatened by limited genetic variability due to its mostly asexual reproduction, limited seed dispersal and survival rates, a slow rate of growth, limited flowering potential, and deer browse (herbivory).

Genetic diversity is necessary for genes to adapt when a species' environment changes, increasing its odds of survival.

Generally, less than twenty percent of a population flowers in any given year unless the population is under unusual stress.

***Habitat Requirement: saturated, but not flooded, with freshwater***



Anthropogenic or man-made threats: The loss of wetlands to urban and agricultural development and timbering operations originally was the primary threat to the species. Current State wetland and Federal endangered species protection laws have slowed the loss of wetlands, such that the major threats to the swamp pink are habitat degradation caused by off-site disturbances; for example, off-site water withdrawal for irrigation or crop production; discharge from sewage treatment plants; increased siltation from the inadequate control of soil erosion; and the introduction of excess nutrients or chemicals into the water.

***Bud: Visible large button, in the center of the leaves, represents next season's flower head***



The Federal Endangered Species Act provides protection for federally listed species and conserves the ecosystems upon which listed species depend.

Endangered means that a species is in immediate danger of becoming extinct throughout all or a significant portion of its range. Threatened means that a species is likely to become endangered in the foreseeable future without human intervention.

***Bud Development: Followed by a stout, hollow stem***



Recovery of this species is dependent upon ensuring the long-term stability of existing populations. Monitoring has become an important conservation tool in the stewardship of this species. However, many New Jersey populations are not monitored on an annual basis.

***Growth: The stem, or scape, elongates during flowering***



Citizens United to Protect the Maurice River and Its Tributaries, Inc. (CU) has partnered with the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, New Jersey Field Office to help form and expand the volunteer base for the Adopt-A-Swamp Pink Population, wherein volunteers play a significant role in recovering this threatened species by monitoring specific sites.

Through this monitoring program, Citizens United has created greater public awareness regarding the imperiled nature of this species.

*Height: 1.5 meters*



Through the Adopt-A-Swamp Pink Population program, volunteers play a significant role in recovering this threatened species. As U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service volunteers, individuals visit a specified swamp pink population annually in April and May to count the number of plants/clumps in a population, map the boundaries of a population, and record general observations about the habitat.

**Fully Developed: In seed (anthesis)**



The purpose of the Adopt-A-Swamp Pink Population program is twofold:

- (1) to obtain trend data on an annual basis to assess the overall health and stability of a swamp pink population and
- (2) to involve the public in recovery efforts.

Those interested in joining the Adopt a Swamp Pink program should contact USFWS.

<http://www.fws.gov/northeast/njfieldoffice/Endangered/adopt.html>

Those interested in our regional efforts in the Maurice River watershed, southern New Jersey, should contact Renee at [rbrecht.cumaurice@yahoo.com](mailto:rbrecht.cumaurice@yahoo.com)

***Winter foliage: leaves turn reddish brown and lie flat on, or slightly raised, from the ground; leaves often hidden by leaf litter***