



**Natural Heritage
& Endangered Species
Program**

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Massachusetts Division of Fisheries & Wildlife

**North Wind Orchid
Platanthera aquilonis
Sheviak**

State Status: **None**
Federal Status: **None**

SPECIES DESCRIPTION: North Wind Orchid is a widespread North American species, which until recently was confused with Northern Green Orchid (*P. hyperborea*), which occurs in Greenland. Both of these species are perennial wildflowers of moist woods or bogs and have variously been lumped as one species with two varieties or as two species. This species is similar to, and might also be confused with, *P. dilatata*, Leafy White Orchid. The North Wind Orchid has several lanceolate to oblanceolate leaves, gradually reduced in size below the flowering stalk where they pass into bracts. Plants are 5-60 cm high. The flowering stalk is compact with many erect or appressed green or greenish-white scentless flowers. This species may self-pollinate with assistance from water droplets, as well as be cross-pollinated by insects.

DISTRIBUTION AND ABUNDANCE: In Massachusetts, North Wind Orchid is known from the western part of the state, in Franklin, Hampshire, Hampden and Berkshire Counties. Nationally, this species has a broad range extending from Newfoundland, south to New Jersey, into the southwest US in New Mexico and Arizona, and up to Alaska. Regionally, it has declined so that it is considered vulnerable in Vermont, critically imperiled in Pennsylvania, and presumed extirpated in Ohio.

HABITAT DESCRIPTION: North Wind Orchid typically is found in rich wetlands and seeps, swamps, edges of streams, meadows, and fields, and may occur in disturbed sites.

THREATS: The primary threats to North Wind Orchid are not known, but may include changes in hydrology, climate change, and shading due to an increase in canopy cover shading the plants. As with many of the showy orchids, deer browse on flowers may severely restrict their ability to reproduce. Collection of flowering

plants, trampling, and off-road vehicles may further compromise the species. In addition, as with all orchids, it is reliant on its association with mycorrhizal fungus, which if destroyed or damaged will impact this species.

REFERENCES:

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Updated 2015

A Species of Greatest Conservation Need in the Massachusetts State Wildlife Action Plan

Massachusetts Division of Fisheries & Wildlife

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