

# River Bulrush

## *Bolboschoenus fluviatilis*

### Description

River Bulrush is a perennial herb that forms colonies from underground stems. The triangular aerial stems are robust and may grow from 2½ to 6½ feet (0.7-2 m) in height. The leaves are alternately arranged, grass-like, elongate, averaging about 3/8 inch (1 cm) wide, and somewhat V-shaped in cross-section. The flowers, appearing from June to August, are grouped in ½ to 1½ inch (1.5-4 cm) spikelets. The spikelets are grouped in a branching cluster at the top of the stem that is subtended by several spreading, leaf-like bracts. The individual fruits are about 3/16 inch (3.5-5 mm) long.

### Distribution & Habitat

River Bulrush has a very broad range with the exception of the southeastern states, across North America. In Pennsylvania, it has been documented historically in the northwestern and southeastern counties. It grows on the shorelines of rivers and streams, and also in marshes and other wet places.

### North American State/Province Conservation Status

Map by NatureServe 2025

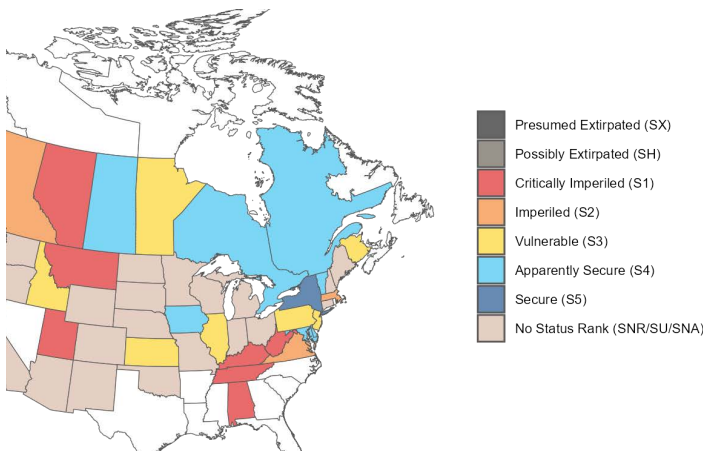


Photo source: PNHP

### Current State Status

The PA Biological Survey (PABS) considers River Bulrush to be a species of special concern, based on the relatively few occurrences that have been recently confirmed and its wetland habitat. It has a PA legal rarity status and a PABS suggested rarity status of Rare. About 30 populations are currently known from the state.

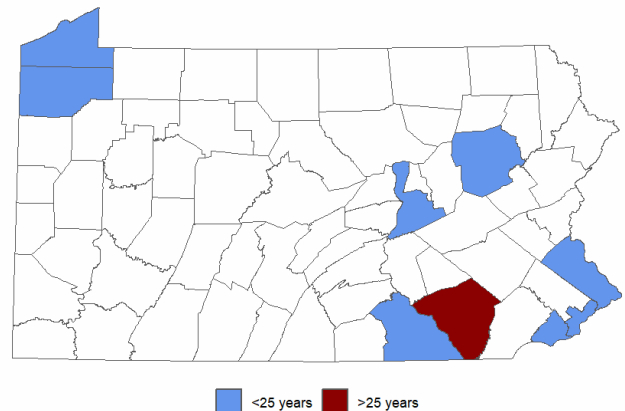
### Conservation Considerations

The viability of the riverine populations of River Bulrush may be enhanced by maintaining the water quality and natural hydrology of the streams, with their seasonal fluctuations and scouring, as well as retaining natural conditions along the shoreline areas. For non-riverine populations, establishing buffers and protecting the hydrology around wetlands are necessary. Invasive species represent a threat to the habitat of river bulrush.

### NatureServe conservation status ranks

**G5** – Globally Secure; **S3**– Vulnerable in Pennsylvania

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Blue: <25 years Red: >25 years

### References

- NatureServe. 2025. NatureServe Explorer [web application] NatureServe, Arlington, Virginia. Available at <https://explorer.natureserve.org> (Accessed: May 8, 2025)
- Pennsylvania Natural Heritage Program. 2025.
- Rhoads, A.F. and W.M. Klein, Jr. 1993. The Vascular Flora of Pennsylvania. American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.
- Rhoads, A.F. and T.A. Block. 2007. The Plants of Pennsylvania: An Illustrated Manual. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

