

Torrey's Bulrush

Schoenoplectus torreyi

Description

Torrey's Bulrush is a grass-like plant that forms patches due to its wide-spreading underground stems, or rhizomes. The stems that bear flowers and fruits are erect and conspicuously 3-sided, and may reach 3 feet (1 m) in height. The leaves are alternately arranged, with a sheathing basal portion and a slender and elongate blade that is somewhat V-shaped in cross-section. The flowers, appearing late June to September, are minute and are grouped together in a dense pointed cluster about 1/2 inch (8-15 mm) in length. A stem usually has 2 or 3 clusters (occasionally only 1, or more than 3) aggregated together, protruding laterally, anywhere from 1-3 inches below what appears to be the end of the stem (actually the end of an erect leaf that subtends the end of the stem). The individual scales of each cluster have greenish midveins and brownish sides. The individual fruit is brownish, three-sided at maturity, about 1/8 inch (3.5 mm) in length, has 6 slender bristles attached at the base and a prominent beak at the tip.



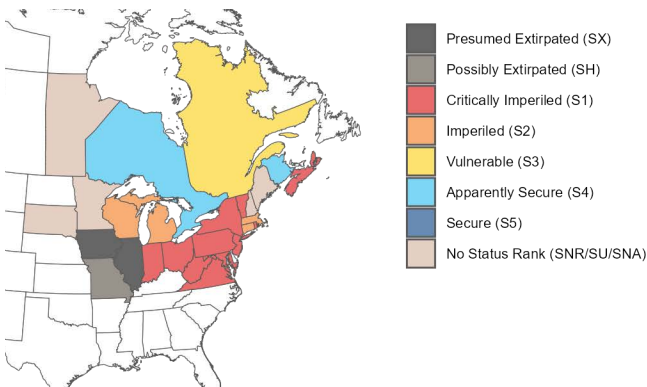
Photo source: PNHP

Distribution & Habitat

Torrey's Bulrush ranges from eastern Canada to Manitoba and south into Virginia, the Great Lakes states, and South Dakota. In Pennsylvania, it is considered a northerly species and has been documented historically in several northern counties. It grows in shallow water and along shorelines of lakes and ponds.

North American State/Province Conservation Status

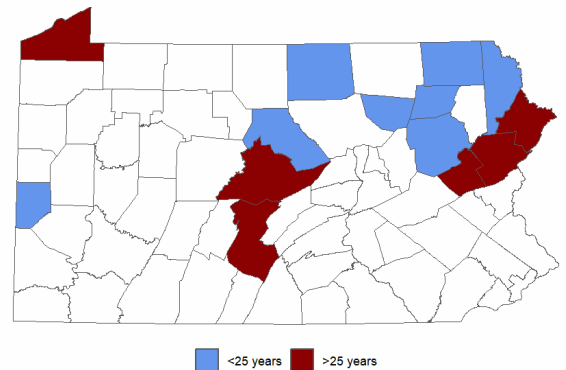
Map by NatureServe 2025



Current State Status

The PA Biological Survey (PABS) considers Torrey's Bulrush to be a species of special concern, based on the relatively few locations that have been recently confirmed and the wetland habitat. It has a PA legal rarity status and a PABS suggested rarity status of Endangered.

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Conservation Considerations

The viability of populations of Torrey's Bulrush and its habitat may be enhanced by creating buffers and protecting the natural hydrology around wetlands and controlling invasive species.

NatureServe conservation status ranks

G4 – Globally apparently secure; **S1** – Critically Imperiled in Pennsylvania

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. 2nd edition. University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.