



Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program

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Massachusetts Division of Fisheries & Wildlife

Showy Orchid *Galearis spectabilis* (L.) Raf.

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

SPECIES DESCRIPTION: Showy Orchid is a small perennial orchid that can grow up to about six inches in flower. There are two broad, fleshy, basal leaves, topped by a single flowering stem that supports one to several pink-and-white, inch-long flowers subtended by a bract. It often grows in small clumps of a few to several dozen plants. It blooms in spring.

DISTRIBUTION AND ABUNDANCE: In Massachusetts, Showy Orchid was found historically in Middlesex, Suffolk, and Worcester counties, but none have been documented in these counties since 1916. Of the 35 documented sites in total, only eight are considered current, meaning they have been observed in the past 25 years. All the current populations are in western Massachusetts, in Berkshire, Franklin, Hampshire, and Hampden counties.

HABITAT DESCRIPTION: This plant grows in rich, mesic calcareous forests. Associated species include Sugar Maple (*Acer saccharum*), White Ash (*Fraxinus americana*), Blue Cohosh (*Caulophyllum thalictroides*),



Photo by Chris Buelow, NHESP

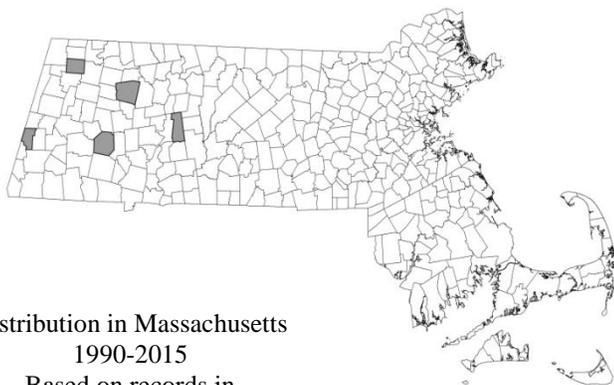
Rattlesnake-fern (*Botrychium virginianum*), Maidenhair Fern (*Adiantum pedatum*), Long-spurred Violet (*Viola rostrata*), Wild Leek (*Allium tricoccum*), Trout Lily (*Erythronium americanum*), toothworts (*Cardamine* spp.), Squirrel Corn (*Dicentra canadensis*), Early Meadow Rue (*Thalictrum dioicum*), Wild Ginger (*Asarum canadense*), and American Ginseng (*Panax quinquefolius*), among other plants common in rich, mesic forests.

THREATS: The primary threats to Showy Orchis are direct destruction of habitat by all forms of development; destruction of individual plants by collection, off-road vehicles, or trampling; and displacement by invasive plant species. Note that rich, mesic forests, the preferred habitat of this species, are particularly susceptible to invasion by exotic plant species.

REFERENCE:

Gleason, H.A., and A. Cronquist. 1991. *Manual of Vascular Plants of Northeastern United States and Adjacent Canada*. Second Edition. The New York Botanical Garden, Bronx, New York.

Prepared 2015



Distribution in Massachusetts
1990-2015
Based on records in
Natural Heritage Database
Map updated 2015

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

Massachusetts Division of Fisheries & Wildlife

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