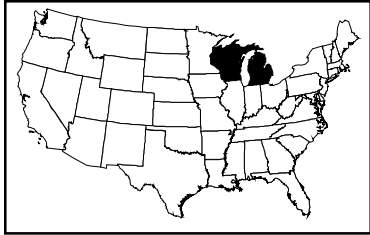




U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service



The dwarf lake iris grows near the northern shorelines of Lakes Michigan and Huron.



Photo by USFWS; Joel Trick

Dwarf Lake Iris

The dwarf lake iris is a *threatened species*. Threatened species are animals and plants that are likely to become endangered in the foreseeable future. *Endangered species* are animals and plants that are in danger of becoming extinct. Identifying, protecting, and restoring endangered and threatened species is the primary objective of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's endangered species program.

What is dwarf lake iris?

Scientific Name - *Iris lacustris*

Appearance - Dwarf lake iris is a miniature iris with showy, deep blue flowers. The flowers are about 1 to 1 ½ inches in width and 1 ½ to 2 ½ inches in height and are born singly on stems less than 2 inches tall. Leaves are up to 6 inches long and ½" wide and are flattened, sword-like, and arranged in fan-shaped clusters. Although flowers are usually blue, lilac or white flowers are sometimes found.

Range - Dwarf lake iris only grows around the Great Lakes and occurs on the northern shores of Lakes Huron and Michigan in Michigan, Wisconsin, and Ontario, Canada.

Habitat - Occurring close to Great Lakes shorelines in cool, moist lakeshore air, dwarf lake iris is found on sand or in thin soil over limestone-rich gravel or bedrock. Habitat is along old beach ridges or behind open dunes, and changing water levels can open new habitat for the plants.

Reproduction - Dwarf lake iris is a low-growing perennial with shallow, slender, creeping rhizomes which produce new fans of leaves at their nodes. It flowers mostly in semi-open habitats with partial sun. Seeds are sometimes produced and are rounded capsules about ½ inch long. Flowers appear from mid-May to early June.

Why is the dwarf lake iris threatened?

Habitat Loss or Degradation - The lakeshore habitat of dwarf lake iris has been greatly reduced by shoreline development. Residential and vacation homes as well as associated road-widening, chemical spraying and salting, and off-road vehicle use have caused disturbance and destruction of habitat.

Collection - An attractive miniature iris, dwarf lake iris has been known to be offered for sale commercially. If collected from wild populations, this could adversely affect the species. Picking the flowers often uproots the plant and will prevent seeds from forming.

What is being done to prevent extinction of dwarf lake iris?

Listing - Dwarf lake iris was added to the U.S. List of Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants in 1988.

Recovery Plan - The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is developing a recovery plan that describes actions needed to help this plant survive.

Research - Dwarf lake iris populations have been monitored to determine long-term population trends and to better understand habitat and reproductive requirements. Genetic studies have been conducted to better explain population structure and differences between populations.

Habitat Protection - A variety of government and private conservation agencies are working to preserve the dwarf lake iris and its habitat. Voluntary protection agreements have also been made with some private landowners.

Public Education - Many plants are located on small private residential lots, and landowner contact programs have been initiated.

What can I do to help prevent the extinction of species?

Learn - Learn more about dwarf lake iris and other endangered and threatened species. Understand how the destruction of habitat leads to loss of endangered and threatened species and our nation's plant and animal diversity. Tell others about what you have learned.

Join - Join a conservation group; many have local chapters.

Protect - Protect water quality by minimizing use of lawn chemicals (i.e., fertilizers, herbicides, and insecticides), recycling used car oil, and properly disposing of paint and other toxic household products.

Grow Natives - Grow native plants in your lawn and garden but obtain the plants from local nurseries, do not dig up native plants from natural areas.