

Species Status Assessment

Common Name	southern wild comfrey	Date Updated:	2024-03-14
Scientific Name	<i>Andersonglossum virginianum</i>	Updated By:	Richard M. Ring
Family	Boraginaceae		

Species Synopsis (a short paragraph which describes species taxonomy, distribution, recent trends, and habitat in New York):

Southern wild comfrey, *Andersonglossum virginianum*, is a perennial herb in the Borage family (Boraginaceae). There are three North American species in the genus *Andersonglossum*, and only two in New York, both of which are rare. The two (*A. virginianum* and *A. boreale*) were previously considered to be varieties of the same species, but are now considered to be distinct (Natureserve 2023). Southern Wild Comfrey reaches the northeastern limit of its range in NY state, and is found south to Florida, and west from Texas to Illinois.

Herbarium records indicate that the species has always been rare in NY, with historical records concentrated in the New York City region and Long Island. The only extant record, first documented by NY Natural Heritage Program in 2022, occurs in Dutchess County in the lower Hudson Valley. Many of Southern Wild Comfrey's historical populations have likely been extirpated by development, though there is still abundant habitat in the lower Hudson Valley. The extant population occurs in a rocky oak-hickory forest, where it is threatened by encroaching invasive species (NYNHP 2023).

I. Status

a. Current legal protected Status

i. Federal: **Candidate:**

ii. New York: Endangered

b. Natural Heritage Program

i. Global: G5T5

ii. New York: S1 **Tracked by NYNHP?** On Active Tracking List

Other Ranks:

COSEWIC: Not listed in Canada

IUCN Red List: Not assessed by IUCN Red List

Status Discussion:

Southern wild comfrey (*Andersonglossum virginianum*) is Endangered in New York (Ring 2023). There is only one extant population, and at least four historically known populations. The extant population, first surveyed by NYNHP in 2022, had a population of 179 plants then, and was threatened by nearby invasive barberry and swallowwort plants. The historical records are mostly from the New York City area and Long Island, with two questionable early records from Ontario and Cortland Counties in central NY.

II. Abundance and Distribution

Region	Present?	Abundance	Distribution	Time Frame	Listing status or S-Rank	SGCN?
North America	Yes	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown		
Northeastern US	Yes	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown		
New York	Yes	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	E	
Connecticut	Yes	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	SNR	
Massachusetts	No	-	-	-		
New Jersey	Yes	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	S2	
Pennsylvania	Yes	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	SNR	
Vermont	No	-	-	-		
Ontario	No	-	-	-		
Quebec	No	-	-	-		

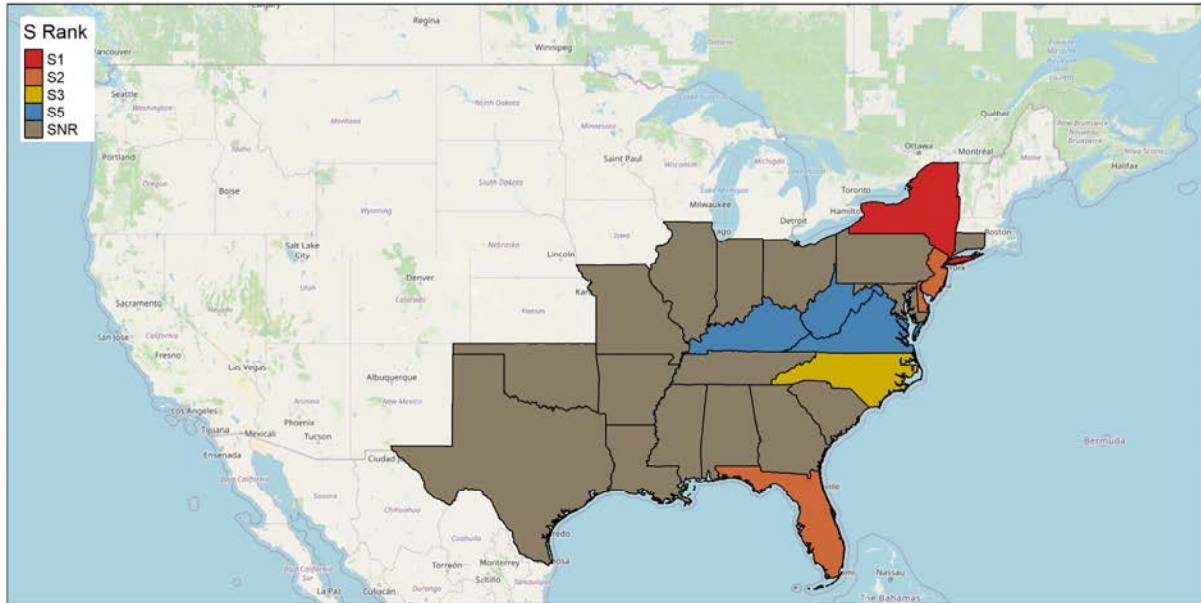


Figure 1 1: *Androsonglossum virginianum* North American distribution.

Percent of North American Range in NY	Classification of NY Range	Distance to core population, if not in NY
1-25%	Peripheral	Unknown

III. NY Rarity and Trends

Trends Discussion

Short term trends (<100 years)

The rediscovery of this species as extant in NY at a previously unknown location in 2022 represents an increasing short-term trend, albeit from zero to a single known location. There are no specific locations to search for the historical collections (NYNHP 2023).

Long term trends

Southern wild comfrey has always been rare in NY. The few historical collections of the species from the state are over 100 years old, and have not been documented since, so the long term trend appears to be downward.

Details of Historic and Current Occurrence

New York is at the northeastern edge of southern wild comfrey’s range. Historically the species was only collected from Staten Island and nearby Long Island. In 2022 it was documented for the first time from Dutchess County in the Hudson Valley. There are two unconfirmed historical records from Cortland and Ontario Counties in central NY, though these may represent misidentifications or escapes from cultivation (NYNHP 2023).

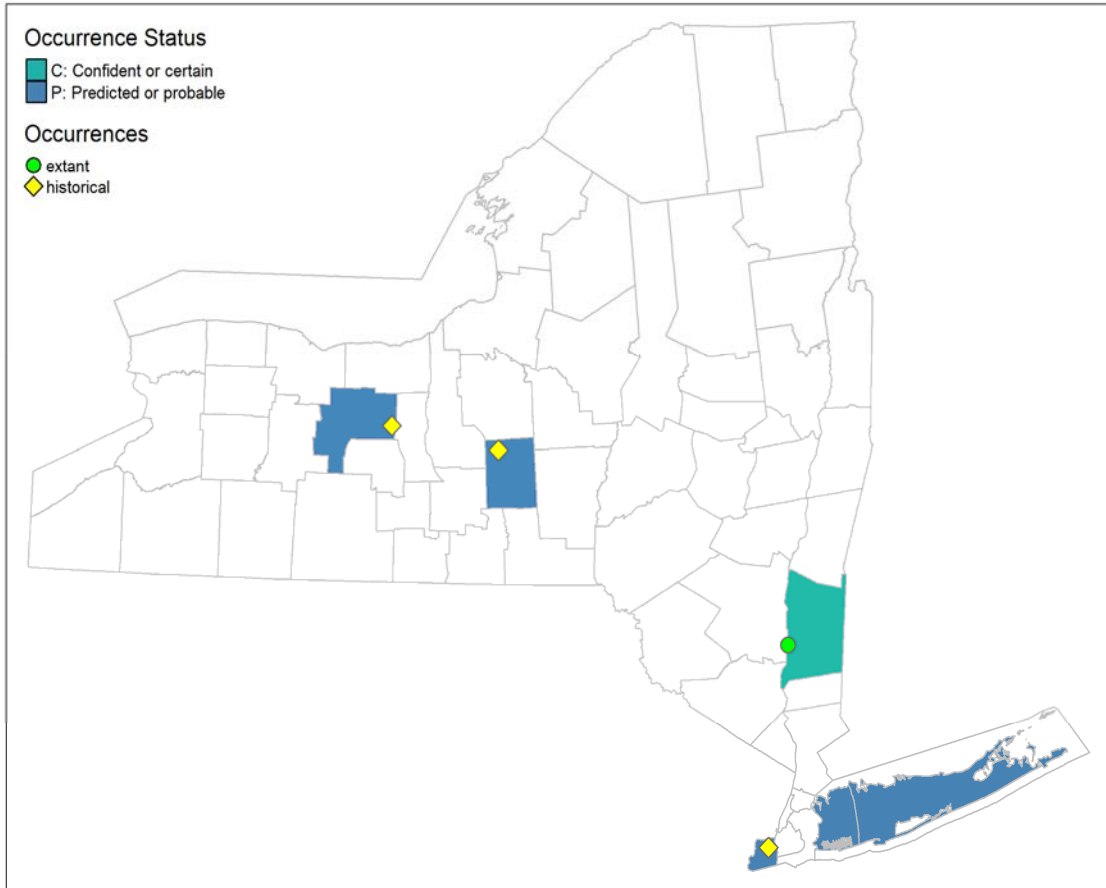


Figure 22: NYS distribution for *Andersonglossum virginianum*.

Table 1. Number of records (element occurrences) of *Andersonglossum virginianum* grouped by the dates known to be extant (the years spanning first observation to last observation) and the number and percent of total of USGS 7.5 minute map quadrangles these observations fall within for New York State.

Years	# of Records	# of distinct quads	% of quads in State
Pre-1995	3	9	0.9
1995-2004	0	0	0.0
2005-2014	0	0	0.0
2015-2023	1	1	0.1

Monitoring in New York

There is no regular monitoring program for the lone known extant site in the state, which is on private land. Monitoring and management are badly needed to protect the existence of this species in the NY.

VI. Threats

The one known extant population is protected from development in a private preserve, but is threatened by adjacent populations of invasive barberry and swallowwort (NYNHP 2023). Herbivory by deer is also a potential threat, although *Andersonglossum* plants contain alkaloids which may inhibit herbivory (van Dam *et al.* 1995). The historical populations and suitable habitat within the apparent range of this plant have been subject to intense commercial and residential development. Collection by humans for medicinal purposes may also be a threat to this species.

Are there regulatory mechanisms that protect the species or its habitat in New York?

Yes:

No:



Unknown:

If yes, describe mechanism and whether adequate to protect species/habitat:

Describe knowledge of management/conservation actions that are needed for recovery/conservation, or to eliminate, minimize, or compensate for the identified threats:

Invasive species need to be kept away from the site in Dutchess County. Regular monitoring of that known site, and surveys at historical sites, are needed.

(Complete Conservation Actions table using IUCN conservation actions taxonomy at link below. Use headings 1-6 for Action Category (e.g., Land/Water Protection) and associated subcategories for Action (e.g., Site/Area Protection) - <https://www.iucnredlist.org/resources/conservation-actions-classification-scheme>)

Table 3. Recommended conservation actions for *Andersonglossum virginianum*.

Conservation Actions	
Action Category	Action
Land/water protection	1.1. Site/area protection
Land/water protection	1.2. Resource & habitat protection
Land/water management	2.1. Site/area management
Land/water management	2.2. Invasive/problematic species control
Land/water management	2.3. Habitat & natural process restoration

VII. References

This SSA drew heavily from these resources:

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