

Mountain Starwort

Stellaria borealis

Description

Mountain Starwort is a relatively delicate herbaceous perennial with a hairless or inconspicuously hairy stem that may grow to 1 foot (ca 0.3 m) or slightly more in height. The leaves are oppositely arranged, hairless or inconspicuously so, stalkless, untoothed on the margins, narrowly elliptic or lance-shaped and pointed at both ends, to 1 inch (2.5 cm) in length and 3/16 inch (5 mm) in width. The flowers, appearing mostly in spring, occur singly along the length of the stem or in few-flowered clusters on the upper stem. Petals may be absent, or if present are white and only a few mm in length and shorter than the green sepals that surround them. The fruit is a small capsule that contains numerous seeds less than 1 mm in length, and when the flowers occur singly the fruit is elevated on a slender stalk that may exceed 1 inch (2.5 cm) in length. Due to the similarity of appearance of this species and other species of *Stellaria*, care must be taken in identification.



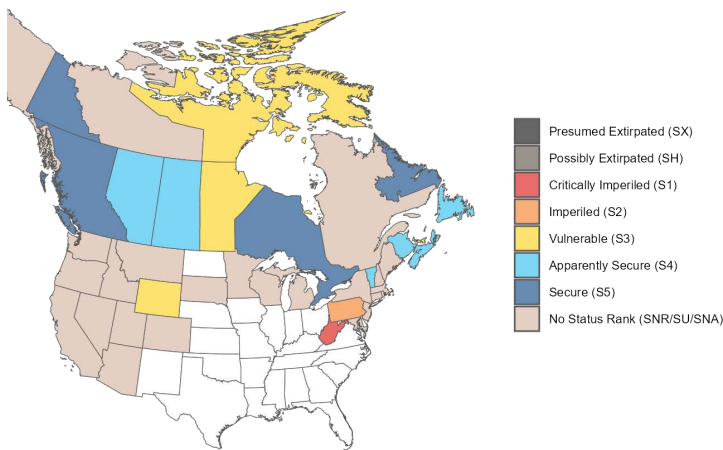
Photo source: PNHP

Distribution & Habitat

Mountain Starwort has a transcontinental range across the cooler regions of North America. In Pennsylvania, it has been documented historically in a scattered pattern, but primarily in the northern and mountain counties. It grows in seeps and spring-fed streamlets, usually in wooded areas.

North American State/Province Conservation Status

Map by NatureServe 2025



Current State Status

The PA Biological Survey (PABS) considers Mountain Starwort to be a species of special concern, based on the limited number of locations recently confirmed and the wetland habitat. It does not have a PA legal rarity status, but has been assigned a PABS suggested rarity status of Tentatively Undetermined.

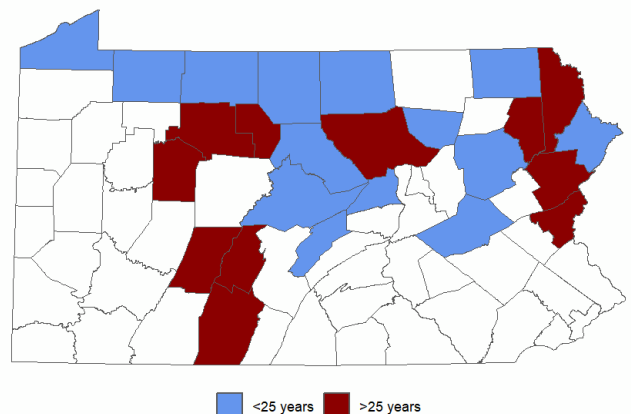
Conservation Considerations

The viability of populations of Mountain Starwort and its habitat may be enhanced by creating buffers and protecting the natural hydrology around springs and seepages and controlling invasive species. It is likely that more populations of Mountain Starwort will be documented.

NatureServe conservation status ranks

G5 – Globally secure; S2 – Imperiled in Pennsylvania

Northern Stitchwort (*Stellaria borealis*)



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