

## SPECIES AND COMMUNITIES OF CONCERN IN LOUISIANA

### Information for Family Forest Owners

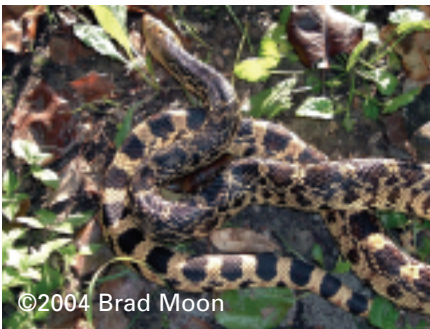
One of the environmental issues of concern today is the worldwide decline in forest habitat and the related loss of biodiversity. As a good land steward, it's important to be aware of plant and animal species and ecological communities of concern that are designated as "imperiled, critically imperiled, threatened, or endangered" and how forest management activities on your lands may affect these species. Critically imperiled (G1) or imperiled (G2) species or ecological communities are globally rare or, because of some factor(s), especially vulnerable to extinction. They are designated as imperiled or critically imperiled by non-government organizations such as NatureServe (and its constituent Natural Heritage programs) or the IUCN (The World Conservation Organization). Threatened and endangered species are listed by government agencies under the U.S. Endangered Species Act or the Canadian Species at Risk Act and may also be listed under state or provincial laws; yet they may or may not be listed as critically imperiled or imperiled, globally.

The **Louisiana Natural Heritage Program** can provide information on species of concern in your area. Log on to [www.wlf.louisiana.gov](http://www.wlf.louisiana.gov) and click on Experience Wildlife then Natural Heritage or call the office at (225) 765-2821. **NatureServe**, [www.natureserve.org](http://www.natureserve.org), has additional information on species and communities of concern. These organizations coordinate the management of inventories of biological diversity in the U.S. and Canada.

The Sustainable Forestry Initiative® (SFI) program ([www.aboutsfi.org](http://www.aboutsfi.org)) combines the perpetual growing and harvesting of trees with the long-term protection of wildlife, plants, soil and water quality. To meet the SFI Standard, program participants who procure wood from family forest owners provide outreach opportunities to family forest owners on conservation of biodiversity for imperiled species.

In Louisiana, the SFI program has partnered with Forests for Watersheds & Wildlife™ to provide you with a series of profiles on species of concern native to Louisiana's forests. The species and communities featured in this profile are examples of many that depend on family forest owners for protection. To view other profiles, visit [www.forestedflyways.org](http://www.forestedflyways.org).

#### Louisiana pine snake — *Pituophis ruthveni*



©2004 Brad Moon

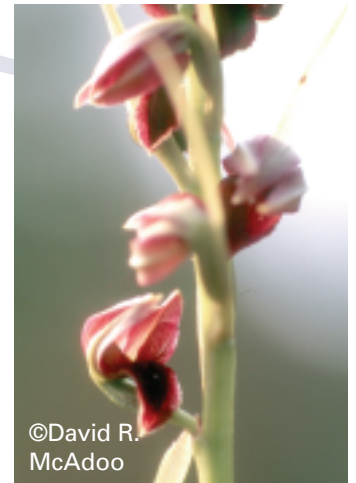
Adults can reach 4-5 feet in length and are beige with blotches of black and brown.

The Louisiana pine snake is ranked as a globally imperiled (G2) species and is also a candidate for listing under the Endangered Species Act. In Louisiana, it can be found in longleaf pine stands, primarily in underground burrows, in the west-central parishes of Natchitoches, Sabine, Vernon, and Bienville. The pine snake is a constrictor, crushing its prey before swallowing it whole. It is an ally of forest owners, as it consumes rodents that can damage or kill seedlings. Loss of habitat to development and decreased use of prescribed fire are the major causes of decline for the snake. Land development has destroyed habitat and also increased traffic, leading to greater road mortality.

Without fire, dense hardwood stands shade out ground cover which provides habitat for prey. Regular use of prescribed fire and hardwood midstory control will improve habitat for the pine snake as well as quail and many other species.

## Giant orchid — *Pteroglossaspis ecristata*

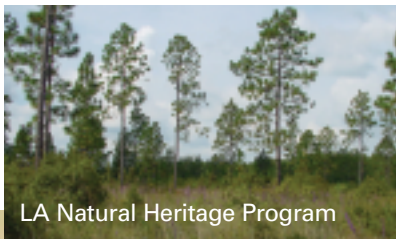
The giant orchid, a globally imperiled (G2G3) species, is known from small, dispersed populations of less than 10 plants in eight parishes—Allen, Beauregard, Grant, Jefferson Davis, St. Tammany, Tangipahoa, Vernon and Washington—as well as sites in Texas. This perennial flowers from June to September and prefers dry to moist sandy soils in upland longleaf pinelands and coastal prairies where sunlight is filtered and there is no shrub competition. The flowering stalk can range in height from 10 inches to 4 feet and have 5 to 30 blooms at the top. Two to three long, pleated leaves growing from the base of the plant also help with identification. Habitat destruction and reduced fire frequency are the main threats to the orchid, which cannot grow where shrubs dominate.



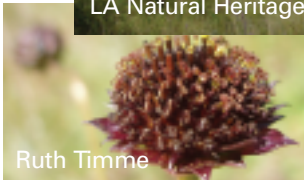
©David R. McAdoo

Flower color can be entirely beige or purplish-brown, or varying mixtures of the two colors.

## Longleaf pine / Little bluestem - Savanna hairgrass - Rayless sunflower woodland — *Pinus palustris* / *Schizachyrium scoparium* - *Muhlenbergia expansa* - *Helianthus radula*



LA Natural Heritage Program



Ruth Timme

The rayless sunflower lacks the yellow petals associated with this plant group.

This globally imperiled (G2) community occurs in the Florida parishes of Louisiana and is restricted to upland rises in flatwoods—low-lying open areas between the drier sandhill community upslope and wetlands downslope. Shrub and midstory layers are typically absent while ground cover is lush and dominated by grasses such as bluestem and Savanna hairgrass. Flowering species, such as goldenrod, aster and the distinctive rayless sunflower, are abundant. Reduced fire frequency, heavily stocked pine stands, agricultural conversion, and over-grazing have contributed to this community's decline. In the past, growing season fires every 2-5 years maintained the diverse herbaceous layer.

### Technical and Cost-share Assistance:

The Partners for Fish & Wildlife program of the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service offers technical and financial assistance to landowners for restoration of native habitat types. Contact: (337) 291-3119 or go to [www.fws.gov/southeast/partners](http://www.fws.gov/southeast/partners).

The Louisiana Natural Resources Conservation Service, at (318) 472-7751, can provide information on federal cost-share opportunities and assistance.

If you want to develop a conservation strategy for one of the species in this profile or find out if rare species might occur on your land, contact the Louisiana Natural Heritage Program at (225) 765-2821 or go to [www.wlf.louisiana.gov](http://www.wlf.louisiana.gov) and click on Experience Wildlife then Natural Heritage.



Produced by Forests for Watersheds & Wildlife™ (FW<sup>2</sup>), a program of the American Forest Foundation. FW<sup>2</sup> works with partners and family forest owners to conserve and create critical habitat for imperiled wildlife species.

Sustainable Forestry Initiative® (SFI), Sustainable Forestry Initiative®, SFI®, and the SFI logo are service marks of the American Forest & Paper Association, Inc.

Copyright American Forest Foundation, 2005. All rights reserved. Reproduction and distribution by permission only.