

Natural Heritage Resource Highlight: Frosted Elfin (*Callophrys irus*)

Global Rarity Rank: G3- Vulnerable **State Rarity Rank:** S1S2-Critically Imperiled/Imperiled

Legal Status: Federal or State Listing-None



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The Frosted elfin is a state rare butterfly that is gray-brown on the dorsal side. The ventral side is red-brown or gray-brown with a large gray patch at the outside and trailing edge of the hind wing. A black spot is usually evident in the center of this patch. They are most often found in dry areas, especially oak woods, shale barrens, pine forests, sandhills and coastal scrub. The elfin is a host plant specialist species and their larvae feed on Wild Lupine (*Lupinus perennis*) and Wild Indigo (*Baptisia tinctoria*). There may be different management approaches for Frosted elfin populations which feed on Lupine versus Wild Indigo. In both cases, open habitat should be preserved and promoted; however, the use of fire, herbicides, and summer mowing might be detrimental if not applied correctly. Habitat destruction and poor land management are likely causes of the decline of this species (DCR-DNH et al. 2013).

As of 2024, 4 extant occurrence of this state rare butterfly were documented in the coastal zone counties of Isle of Wight, Caroline, and City of Suffolk. Historically, they were also known from the ridge and valley region of Virginia.

Literature Cited

Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation - Division of Natural Heritage and Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources. 2013. Atlas of Rare Butterflies, Skippers, Moths, Dragonflies, and Damselflies of Virginia. Accessed at www.vararespecies.org on March 7, 2024.