

CREeping STAR-HAIR FERN

Thelypteris reptans (J.F. Gmel.) C.V. Morton

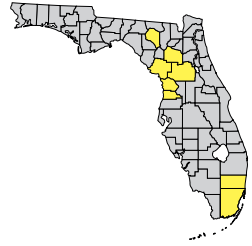
Synonyms: *Goniopteris reptans* (J. F. Gmel.) C. Presl

Family: Thelypteridaceae (marsh fern or maiden fern)

FNAI Ranks: G5/S2

Legal Status: US—none FL—Endangered

Wetland Status: US—none FL—FACW



Thelypteris reptans

Gil Nelson



Thelypteris sclerophylla

Gil Nelson

Field Description (photo, left, and drawing, left): Fern with evergreen fronds, arching or prostrate, often rooting at the tips, 4 - 12 inches long, with green leaf stalks. Leaflets, 0.5 - 1 inch long, with rounded teeth and star-shaped hairs (visible with magnification). Stems creeping or slightly erect, scaly and covered with star-shaped hairs. Sori round.

Similar Species: There are 17 species of *Thelypteris* in Florida, many found in the same rocky habitat as creeping star-hair fern, which is distinguished by relatively small fronds that root at the tip and closely spaced leaflets with shallow, rounded teeth and blunt tips.

Related Rare Species (photo, right, and drawing, right): Stiff star-hair fern (*Thelypteris sclerophylla*), state-endangered, also has star-shaped or forked hairs on the creeping stems and fronds. Unlike creeping star-hair fern, it has pointed teeth on the leaflets and does not root at the tips of fronds. In FL, stiff star-hair fern occurs only in rockland hammocks in Dade County, but it is common in the West Indies and Central and South America. Also see toothed lattice-vein fern (*Thelypteris serrata*) in this guide.

Creeping star-hair fern

Thelypteris reptans

Habitat: Limestone grottoes and sinkholes.

Best Survey Season: All year.

Range-wide Distribution: FL, Mexico, West Indies, Guatemala, Venezuela.

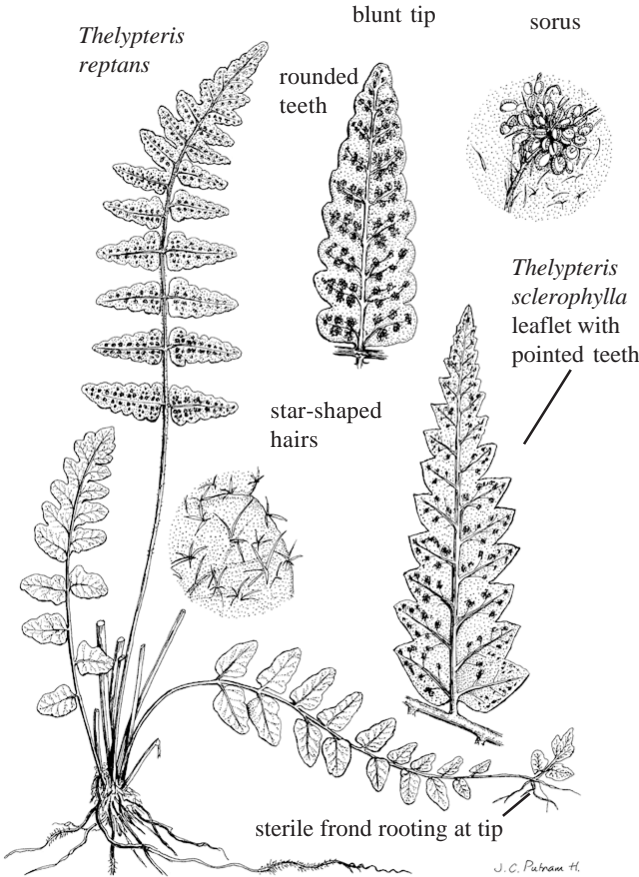
Conservation Status: Creeping star-hair fern was collected from several counties in central Florida in the early 1900's, but has been seen only in Suwannee, Citrus, and Dade counties in recent years. Stiff star-hair fern occurs in two conservation areas in Dade County.

Protection & Management: Both of these species are protected only in Dade County. Limerock mining, clearing of mesic and rockland hammocks, invasion by exotic species, and lowering of the water table, has destroyed

much of these species' habitat.

Preservation of habitat and natural hydrology is the most important protection strategy.

References:
Coile 2000,
FNA 1993,
IRC 1999,
Nelson 2000,
Wunderlin 1998,
Wunderlin and Hansen 2000,
Wunderlin and Hansen 2000a.



J. C. Palmara H.