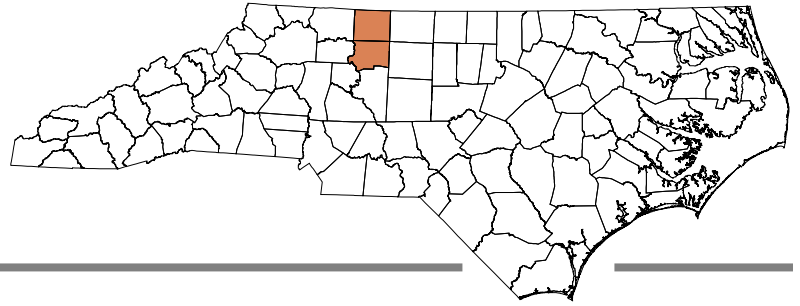

Small-anthered bittercress

Cardamine micranthera

Endangered (September 21, 1989)



Description: Small-anthered bittercress is a slender, erect herb of the mustard family, usually with one but occasionally with multiple stems, either simple or branched, 8-16 inches (20-40 cm) high. Roots are fibrous. Leaf edges have shallow, rounded teeth. Bottom (basal) leaves are lobed, 0.4-0.8 inch (1-2 cm) long, and 0.2-0.24 inch (0.5-0.6 cm) wide. Upper leaves are alternate and usually unlobed, 0.4-0.6 inch (1-1.5 cm) long, and wedge shaped, with the narrow point at the stem. Reduced leaves (bracts) occur at the base of the flowers. The flowers have four white petals, 0.08-0.12 inch (2-3 mm) long, six stamens, and small, round anthers.

Life History: Very little is known about the autecology of this species, including the identity of pollinators although ants have been observed on the flowers. Flowering and fruiting occur April-May. Seeds are brown, about 0.04 inch (1 mm) long.

Habitat: Primarily seeps and wet rock crevices of stream banks, adjoining sandbars, moist woods near small streams fully to partially shaded by trees and shrubs. Occasionally found in full sun (one population in Virginia).

Distribution: Endemic to the Dan River drainage in the north central upper Piedmont of North Carolina and south central Piedmont of Virginia.

Threats: Scarcity of populations and small numbers of individual plants makes them especially vulnerable to disturbance from agriculture and residential development. Although all remaining populations are on private lands, they are unprotected and threatened by impoundment, channelization, natural flooding and drought, and conversion to agriculture or silviculture. Encroachment by exotic species like Japanese honeysuckle threaten habitat.

Recommendations: Education of private landowners; establish protection and management of sites. Search for additional populations.

Sources: Early 1991, Hardin 1977, Radford et al. 1964, USFWS 1991a.

