

Frosted Elfin

(*Callophrys irus arsace*)

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The **Frosted Elfin** (*Callophrys irus arsace*) is a small, primarily brown hairstreak butterfly. It is widespread across the eastern half of the United States from the Northeast and Great Lakes south to Florida and west to eastern Texas. However, it is rare and in decline in most areas. In fact, the Frosted Elfin is listed as endangered, threatened or of conservation concern in 11 states and has been lost entirely from Canada. It reaches its southernmost distribution in northern Florida where only a handful of small remaining populations are known to occur.

The Frosted Elfin occurs in regularly disturbed habitats such as oak-pine barrens, oak savannahs and upland pine or sandhill where its larval host plants, Wild Indigo (*Baptisia tinctoria*) and Wild Lupine (*Lupinus perennis*), grow. These habitats have dwindled significantly due to land development and degradation of vegetation because of succession and fragmentation, resulting in continued declines of the butterfly. Fire, both natural and prescribed, is the major source of disturbance in these systems and is critical for maintaining optimal habitat quality. But fire also can be potentially harmful to small populations if improperly applied. Research at the University of Florida shows that fire management for the Frosted Elfin should only occur in a portion of a species occupied area, be rotated between years and be a fast moving fire to limit mortality.

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Cover photo by: Jaret Daniels

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