

Mitchell's Satyr, *Neonympha mitchelli mitchelli*

Status:

State: Endangered

Federal: Endangered

Identification

The Mitchell's satyr butterfly (*Neonympha mitchelli mitchelli*) is a small (1.5-in. wingspan); brownish butterfly that can be identified by the presence of a continuous series of five yellow-ringed dark ocelli (eye spots) on the underside of the wing surfaces (Scott 1986).



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Habitat

The species inhabits calcareous (limestone) wet meadows and fens that feature a dense cover of sedges and scattered shrubs.

Status and Conservation

Much like the bog turtle, which shares many of the same habitat requirements, the Mitchell's satyr historically relied upon natural agents to maintain the open conditions of its habitat, including beavers, grazing herbivores and fire (U.S. FWS, 1997). Today, however, as trees and shrubs invade open wet meadows and fens, sedges are out-competed, which can ultimately affect the species' reproductive success.

The loss of habitat due to plant succession, wetland draining, filling and impounding, fragmentation of the landscape and the spraying of biocides for agricultural purposes are the primary reasons the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the state of New Jersey listed the Mitchell's satyr as endangered in 1991.

In Warren and Sussex counties, New Jersey, where the last two populations historically occurred, suitable calcareous sedge meadow habitats are common; however, extensive surveys conducted at these potential habitats over the past decade have failed to reveal the presence of any Mitchell's satyrs. It is possible that the species was always relatively rare in New Jersey. Nonetheless, each year Endangered and Nongame Species Program biologists discover new Mitchell's satyr habitats, thus the species cannot be considered extirpated from New Jersey until each site is thoroughly surveyed.