CHAPMAN'S YELLOW-EYED GRASS
Xyris chapmanii Bridges & Orzell
Synonyms: none
Family: Xyridaceae (yellow-eyed grass)
FNAI Ranks: G3/S3?
Legal Status: US-none; FL-none

Petal blades about 3 mm long. Along margin of depression marsh in a sandhill. Spring Creek Unit of Big Bend Wildlife Management Area. Photo by Kelly Anderson.

Field Description: Perennial **herb** with **scapes** 20 - 110 cm tall, but usually greater than 50 cm tall and spirally twisted; **leaves** smooth and 2 - 4 mm wide; upper portion of **leaf blades** conspicuously twisted; **base** of plant deeply set in the substrate, without distinct outer scale leaves; **leaf bases** not noticeably expanded, the plant base therefore not bulbous, dark brown; **spikes** narrowly lanceolate, ellipsoid, to broadly ovoid, 4 - 40 mm long; **petal blades** ca. 3 mm long; **petal blades** suborbicular, yellow; **lateral sepals** shorter than the subtending bracts, and therefore hidden (except when the spikes open to shed seeds) with keel of lateral sepal finely lacerate; **seeds** translucent; not farinose; **seeds** narrowly ovoid or narrowly ellipsoidal, ca. 1.0 mm long.

Similar Species: Tall yellow-eyed grass (*Xyris platylepis*) is a common perennial herb with scapes 20 - 110 cm tall, but usually greater than 50 cm tall and spirally twisted; leaves smooth 5 - 10 mm wide; leaf and scape surfaces smooth (or scabrous only along margins and ridges); base of plant shallowly set on the substrate, often with short, black outer scale leaves; leaf bases noticeably expanded, the plant base therefore appearing bulbous and pinkish, purplish, or dark brown; upper portion of leaf blades conspicuously twisted; spikes narrowly lanceolate, ellipsoid, to broadly ovoid, 4 - 40 mm long; petal blades ca. 5 mm long; petal blades obovate, white or yellow; lateral sepals shorter than the subtending bracts, and therefore hidden (except when the spikes open to shed seeds) with keel of lateral sepal finely lacerate; seeds translucent; not farinose; seeds ovoid or ellipsoid, 0.5 - 0.6 mm long.

Related Rare Species: Harper's yellow-eyed grass (*Xyris scabrifolia*) is a perennial herb with scapes 20 - 110 cm tall, but usually greater than 50 cm tall and spirally twisted; leaves scabrous and 2 - 10 mm wide; leaf and scape surfaces prominently papillose or tuberculate-scabrid; base of plant shallowly set on the substrate, often with short, black outer scale leaves; leaf bases noticeably expanded, the plant base therefore appearing bulbous and pinkish, purplish, or dark brown; upper portion of leaf blades conspicuously twisted; spikes narrowly lanceolate, ellipsoid, to broadly ovoid, 4 - 40 mm long; petal blades ca. 5 mm long; petal blades suborbicular, yellow; lateral sepals shorter than the subtending bracts, and therefore hidden (except when the spikes open to shed seeds) with keel of lateral sepal finely lacerate; seeds translucent; not farinose; seeds narrowly ovoid or narrowly ellipsoidal, ca. 1.0 mm long.

Habitat: Depression marshes, sandhill seepage bogs in areas of copious lateral seepage in deep muck soils, beaver pond margins.

Best Survey Season: Flowering August - September; fruiting September - October.

Range-wide Distribution: With a disjunct distribution in the Southeastern Coastal Plain: South NJ; South-central NC south to Central SC (in the fall-line Sandhills); West-central GA; Panhandle FL west through South AL to South MS; East TX.

Conservation Status: This species is restricted to seepage slopes in the western panhandle. There are approximately seven occurrences, five of which are protected on conservation lands.

Protection and Management: Avoid soil disturbance to seepage slopes and ecotones to depression marshes nested within sandhill habitat.

References: Moyer & Bridges 2015, Sorrie, Van Eerden, & Russo 1997, Weakley, A. S. and the Southeastern Flora Team 2024.

Growing in a depression pond surrounded by sandhill at Spring Creek Unit of Big Bend Wildlife Management Area. Photo by Kelly Anderson.

Along margin of depression marsh surrounded by sandhill. Spring Creek Unit of Big Bend Wildlife Management Area. Photo by Kelly Anderson.

Dark brown base deeply set in substrate along edge of depression marsh in a sandhill at Spring Creek Unit of Big Bend Wildlife Management Area. Photo by Kelly Anderson.