

A SOUTHERN RECORD FOR SISYRINCHIUM CAMPESTRE BICKN.
IN ILLINOIS

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While conducting a phytosociological study during the spring of 1973, a new species of vascular plant was recorded for Southern Illinois. Two flowering individuals of the blue-eyed grass (Sisyrinchium campestre Bickn.) were found in the Williams Tower Hill area (Pope County) on a dry, south facing, exposed site. The specimen collected for the SIU Herbarium is pale green with leaves and stems 1 to 1.5 mm. broad and stems up to 35 cm. tall. The single spathe is sessile with an outer margin free to the base; the perianth is blue.

In Illinois, S. campestre is found in north-western and west-central counties extending south to Madison County on the west. The Southern Illinois record is approximately 120 miles disjunct from the Central Illinois distribution and approximately 70 miles disjunct from its range from Perry County, Missouri.

The species is normally restricted to prairie habitats; however, in Pope County it was found as an understory plant in dry oak woods of low stature composed predominantly of post oak (Quercus stellata), blackjack oak (Q. marilandica), hickory (Carya spp.), and white oak (Q. alba). The most common understory species included curly grass (Danthonia spicata), pussytoes (Antennaria plantaginifolia), broomsedge (Andropogon virginicus), sunflower (Helianthus divaricatus), and false dandelion (Krigia dandelion).

The diameter-size class distribution of mature trees, presence of very large, dead trees, and relatively dense seedling and sapling strata suggest that a prairie-oak savannah community may have once occupied the site. The oak savannah community, also called oak-hickory barrens, was described by Peck (1834) as "...of mixed characters, uniting forest and prairie. The timber is generally scattering, of a rough and stunted appearance..." Curtis (1959) states that such communities were maintained by fire but with the cessation of fires in the middle 1800's, they rapidly changed into oak woodland. Additional evidence for past prairie occupancy of the site is found in the presence of other common prairie species such as spiderwort (Tradescantia virginiana), sedge (Carex pennsylvanica), flowering spurge (Euphorbia corollata), sunflower (Helianthus divaricatus), prairie parsley (Polytaenia nuttallii),

and downy phlox (Phlox pilosa).

Curtis, J.T. 1959. Vegetation of Wisconsin. Univ. of Wis. Press
Madison. 657 pp.

Peck, J.M. 1834. A Gazetteer of Illinois in Three Parts: View of State,
County and Stream, Prairie, Bottom, Bluff, etc. Jacksonville.