

## WHITE BIRDS-IN-A-NEST

*Macbridea alba* Chapman

**Synonyms:** none

**Family:** Lamiaceae (mint)

**FNAI Ranks:** G2/S2

**Legal Status:** US-Threatened FL-Endangered

**Wetland Status:** US-FACW++ FL-FACW



Occurring in mesic flatwoods in the Apalachicola National Forest. Photo taken by Amy Jenkins.

**Field Description:** Perennial **herb**, 0.3 - 0.45 m tall, with erect, square **stems**. **Leaves** 7.5 - 10 cm long, opposite in 6 - 8 pairs, thick and usually rough-hairy, widest above the middle with rounded tips, dotted with glands; **leaf margins** with low, widely spaced teeth tipped with glands; **leaf stalks** with narrow wings. **Flowers** held erect in short, leafy heads usually at the ends of branches; **flowers** showy, over 2.5 cm long, snowy white with 4 stamens with cottony hairs; upper lip hood-like, lower lip 3-lobed.

**Similar Species:** This showy mint species is unmistakable when in flower. Vegetatively, it resembles the rare associate Chapman's crownbeard (*Verbesina chapmanii*), but it may be distinguished by its square stem and leaves that are less hairy and rough.

**Related Rare Species:** Several rare mint family species occur in FL Panhandle flatwoods, including Florida skullcap (*Scutellaria floridana*) and mock pennyroyal (*Stachydeoma graveolens*).

**Habitat:** Wet to mesic pine flatwoods and associated roadsides.

**Best Survey Season:** Summer; May to mid-July, more profusely in the two years following a fire.

**Range-wide Distribution:** Endemic to the Florida Panhandle.

**Conservation Status:** Endemic to small area of Florida Panhandle. Thirty-six occurrences (including 13 failed to find occurrences) are extant as of 2024, 25 protected of those protected on conservation land. Most of the occurrences are within the Apalachicola National Forest in Florida, but some are on nearby state conservation lands. Threatened by fire exclusion and/or insufficient fire which leads to shrub encroachment in the flatwoods habitat. Decreases in the quality and extent of appropriate habitat within this species' very limited range, and recent surveys within its range, suggest that the species is declining. The plants cannot withstand modern intensive forestry practices such as clear-cutting, chopping and tilling of the substrate, dense plantings of pine, and the subsequent exclusion of fire.

**Protection and Management:** Burn flatwoods and good quality pine plantations every 2-4 years. Avoid mechanical disturbance of soils and maintain open canopy and shrub layers.

**References:** Clewell 1985, Coile 2000, Godfrey and Wooten 1981, Kral 1983, USFWS 1994c, Ward 1979, Wunderlin 1998, Wunderlin and Hansen 2000a.



Flower buds from above. Photo by Amy Jenkins.

