

Species Brief

Callophrys irus Frosted Elfin



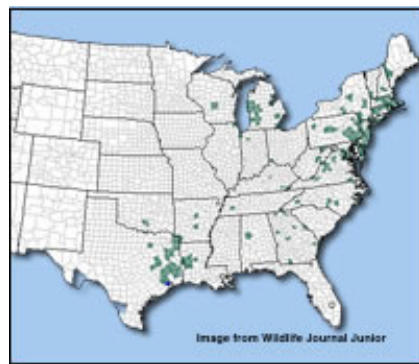
The Frosted Elfin is a small brown butterfly that lives in populations scattered across the eastern half of the United States. While it has a few populations in New England, it's mostly found much farther south.

It's a fairly nondescript species, that most of us wouldn't even see if it was sitting near us on the forest floor, but it acts as pollinator for a number of flowers, and a prey animal for many insect-eating creatures.

While its range covers a large area of the United States, it's not found everywhere within its range. Instead, you can find it in scattered populations from Texas, to Wisconsin, and over to New England. While Massachusetts isn't at the extreme north of its range, it's close to it. Historically, the Frosted Elfin has been relatively rare in that state.

In more recent years, though, the Frosted Elfin has shown a population increase of *1,000%* in Massachusetts, at the same time as other butterfly species – ones that have more northern ranges – have shown a strong population *decrease*.

The implication is that the Frosted Elfin, and other butterflies in Massachusetts, are already shifting their ranges in response to the rise in global temperature. What that means in the long term remains to be seen, but for now it's yet another indication that life on Earth is undergoing a dramatic upheaval as temperatures rise, and weather patterns change.



Response type:

Range Shift ♦ Evolution ♦ Behavior Change ♦ Community Imbalance ♦ Extinction

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