

**GENETIC VARIATION IN THE ILLINOIS-THREATENED HILL PRAIRIE LARKSPUR**

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*Abstract: Delphinium carolinianum* is a threatened wildflower in the state of Illinois, where it is limited to fragmented hill prairies along the Mississippi River. Fragmented populations often suffer a lack of gene flow with other populations and may fall into inbreeding depression, which ultimately leads to extinction. Through use of AFLP molecular markers, we assessed the patterns of genetic variation within and between populations of *D. carolinianum* to better understand the stability of extant populations of this rare wildflower. Our data show that high levels of genetic variation are present within the populations studied; yet it is unclear whether this variation is due to current gene flow or preservation of historic variation.