

-State Species Abstract-
-Wyoming Natural Diversity Database-

ACHNATHERUM SWALLENII
[*ORYZOPSIS SWALLENII*]
SWALLEN MOUNTAIN-RICEGRASS
Family: Poaceae

Status:

US Fish & Wildlife Service: None.
Agency Status: None.

Heritage Rank:

Global: G5 State: S2
WYNDD Plant List: Regional endemic
(Medium conservation priority)

Description: Swallen mountain ricegrass is a perennial bunchgrass 1.5-4 dm tall with narrow, strongly rolled leaf blades, and very short (0.3 mm) ligules that are higher on the sides than in the middle. The inflorescence is a very narrow panicle 3-6 cm long. Spikelets are 1-flowered, 5-6 mm long, with narrowly pointed glumes which are longer than the floret. Lemmas are rounded at the tip and densely hairy, each with a bent awn 5-6 mm long arising from between 2 terminal teeth. These awns fall off soon after flowering (Hitchcock and Cronquist 1969).

Synonyms: *Oryzopsis swallenii*

Similar Species: *Piptatherum pungens* has rounded glumes and awns only 1-2 mm long. *Oryzopsis asperifolia* has spikelets 6-9 mm long and leaf blades 2-8 mm wide. *Piptatherum exiguum* has ligules 1.5-5 mm long, and glumes which are broadly acute at the apices. *Festuca saximontana* (and similar-appearing species) have 2-several florets per spikelet (Dorn 1992).

Flowering/Fruiting Period: June-July.

Distribution: Regional endemic of east-central Idaho and western Wyoming. In Wyoming, it is known only from the western



Above: *Achnatherum swallenii* by Steve Laster.

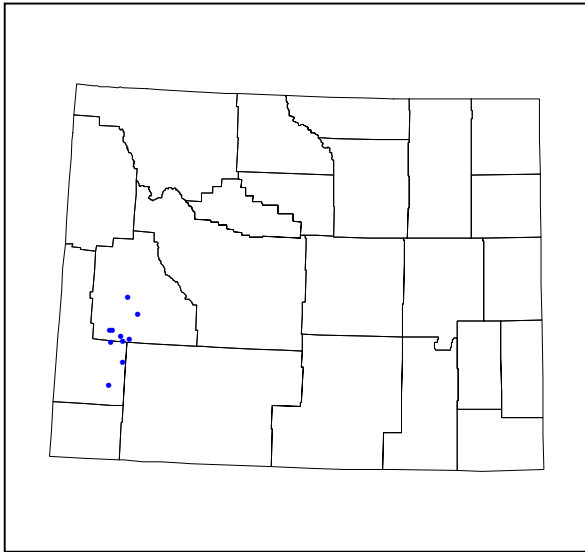
Green River Basin in Lincoln and Sublette Counties.

Habitat: In Wyoming, this species occurs primarily on rocky slopes, rims, and mesa summits with sandy to gravelly limey-clay soils covered with a lag surface of gravel (often derived from the Bridger Formation). It is commonly associated with *Artemisia nova* or *A. tridentata* grasslands with ca 40% cover at 6500-7900 feet.

Occurrences in Wyoming: Known from 10 extant locations, 7 of which have been discovered or relocated since 1993 (most recently in 1998).

Abundance: Statewide abundance is not known. Individual populations may be

locally abundant, especially once a good



search-image is formed (initially, the plants are difficult to distinguish).

Wyoming distribution of *Oryzopsis swallenii*.

Trends: Not known.

Protection status: All known occurrences are on state or public lands managed for multiple use.

Threats: Most occurrences are found on ridge crests within active oil and natural gas fields. Most of these sites are probably threatened due to their proximity to unstable slopes. Impacts from grazing are not known.

Managed Areas: Occurs on land managed by the BLM Kemmerer, Pinedale, and Rock Springs Field Offices.

References:

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