

-State Species Abstract-
-Wyoming Natural Diversity Database-

ASCLEPIAS UNCIALIS
DWARF MILKWEED
Family: Asclepiadaceae

Status:

US Fish & Wildlife Service: None (Former Category 2 candidate for listing under the Endangered Species Act).

Agency Status: USFS Region 2 Sensitive.

Heritage Rank:

Global: G3G4 State: SH

Range Context: Disjunct

Wyoming Contribution Rank: Unknown

Description: Dwarf milkweed is a low-growing perennial herb with several to many spreading or erect stems 1.5-7 cm tall. Stems exude milky sap when broken. Lower stem leaves are oval to lance-shaped, 1.5-2 cm long and 6 mm wide, while the upper leaves are linear and 2-3 mm wide. The umbel-like inflorescence is typically terminal and consists of 7-12 flowers. Each flower has five reflexed, greenish-purple sepals and five reflexed or spreading purplish-rose petals surrounding a central column-shaped structure (gynostegium) composed of fused styles, stigmas, and stamens. Each anther is enclosed in a fleshy hood 1.5 mm long that also contains a tongue-shaped protrusion (horn) that exceeds the hood in length. Fruits are spindle-shaped, 3.5-5 cm long, and contain numerous seeds with a cluster of long, whitish-tan hairs (Dorn 2001, Great Plains Flora Association 1986).

Similar Species: *Asclepias pumila* differs in having uniformly narrow, linear leaves and whitish flowers.

Flowering/Fruiting Period: Flowers late April to mid-May in most of its range. In Wyoming

it has flowered in June. Fruit present late May-June.

Distribution: Occurs in Nevada, northwestern Oklahoma, Arizona, New Mexico, eastern Colorado, and southeastern Utah, with disjunct populations in southwestern Wyoming. In Wyoming it is known only from the original collection site of C. C. Parry in 1873 labeled "Green River". Dorn and Locklear (Locklear 1991) believe that Parry's party crossed the Green River near the junction of the Big Sandy River in NW Sweetwater County. This site is located within Seedskaadee National Wildlife Refuge. Dr. William Weber of the University of Colorado believes that Parry's Wyoming collection is actually from northeastern Colorado, although Robert Dorn has shown that Parry was in Wyoming on the date the specimen was collected.

Habitat: Found on lower slopes of escarpments and mesas in semi-arid shortgrass prairie in the eastern portion of its range (Colorado and New Mexico). In Wyoming it is reported from grassy hills.

Occurrences in Wyoming: Known from one historical collection by Charles Parry in 1873. This population has not been relocated and cannot be mapped.

Abundance: Abundance unknown. May be extirpated in Wyoming.

Range: Disjunct in Wyoming. Known only from the original 1873 collection site, given by Parry as "Green River".

Trends: May be extirpated.

Protection status: If Dorn and Locklear are correct about Parry's collection site, this area is contained within Seedskaadee National Wildlife Refuge.

Threats: Habitat modification is a potential threat.

Managed Areas: Possibly Seedskaadee National Wildlife Refuge.

References:

Colorado Native Plant Society. 1997. Rare Plants of Colorado, second edition. Falcon Press Publ., Helena, MT.

Decker, K. (2006, April 24). *Asclepias uncialis* Greene (wheel milkweed): a technical conservation assessment. [Online]. USDA Forest Service, Rocky Mountain Region. Available: <http://www.fs.fed.us/r2/projects/scp/assessments/asclepiasuncialis.pdf>

Dorn, R.D. 2001. Vascular Plants of Wyoming, third edition. Mountain West Publishing, Cheyenne, WY.

Great Plains Flora Association. 1986. Flora of the Great Plains. Univ. Kansas Press, Lawrence, KS.

Fertig, W. 1994. Guide to Sensitive Wyoming plants of US Forest Service Region 2 (with emphasis on plants of Bighorn, Medicine Bow, and Shoshone National Forests). Unpublished report prepared as a handout for the TES species identification workshop conducted for US Forest Service Region 2 in Laramie, WY, 11 May 1994.

Fertig, W., C. Refsdal, and J. Whipple. 1994. Wyoming Rare Plant Field Guide. Wyoming

Rare Plant Technical Committee, Cheyenne Wyoming.

Fertig, W., L. Welp, and S. Markow. 1998. The status of rare plants in southwest Wyoming. Report prepared for the Bureau of Land Management by the Wyoming Natural Diversity Database, Laramie, WY.

Locklear, J. H. 1993. Missing in Wyoming. Wyoming Native Plant Society Newsletter 12 (2): 3-4.

Locklear, J.H. 1991. The status of *Asclepias uncialis* Greene in eastern Colorado and northeastern New Mexico. Prepared for the Colorado Field Office of The Nature Conservancy by the Dyck Arboretum of the Plains, Hesston College, KS.

Locklear, J.H. 1996. The biology, ecology and conservation needs of *Asclepias uncialis* Greene in Colorado. Unpublished report prepared for the Colorado Natural Areas Program and the Colorado Native Plant Society by the Nebraska Statewide Arboretum, University of Nebraska-Lincoln. 53 pp + appendices.

Spackman, S., B. Jennings, J. Coles, C. Dawson, M. Minton, A. Kratz, and C. Spurrier. 1997. Colorado Rare Plant Field Guide. Prepared for the Bureau of Land Management, US Forest Service, and US Fish and Wildlife Service by the Colorado Natural Heritage Program, Ft. Collins, CO.

Author: Walter Fertig

Updated: by Joy Handley 08-08-19