

Astragalus diversifolius

MEADOW MILKVETCH

Family: Fabaceae

Agency Status:

US Fish & Wildlife Service: None.

US Forest Service: Region 4 Sensitive

WY Bureau of Land Management: Sensitive

Heritage Rank:

Global: G2

State: S2

Range Context: Regional Endemic/Sparse

Wyoming Contribution Rank: High

Description: Meadow milkvetch is a perennial herb with few to many slender, prostrate or decumbent stems 20-50 cm long radiating from the root crown. The linear to narrowly oval leaf blades are 2-5.5 cm long, and are composed of 1-5 grass-like leaflets, which are 2-5 mm broad. The terminal leaflet is much longer than the lateral leaflets and continuous with the leaf stalk. The inflorescence is a loose raceme of 2-8 flowers. The flowers are white or cream-colored and often faintly lilac-tinged, with calyx tubes 3.2-5.4 mm long. The fruits are oblong (10-17 mm x 3-4 mm) (Barneby 1989; Dorn 2001, Fertig et al. 1994, Hitchcock and Cronquist 1961, Heidel 2009).

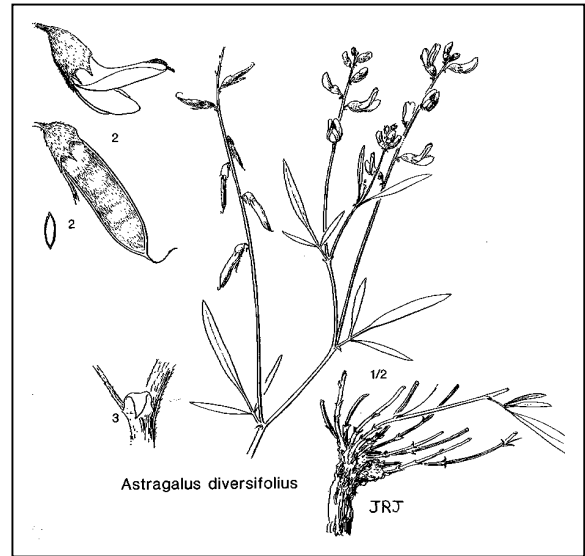
Synonym: *Astragalus diversifolius* var. *diversifolius*

Local field characters: Recognized by its linear leaves and sprawling growth form.

Similar Species: *Astragalus convallarius* (syn. *A. diversifolius* ssp. *campestris* var. *campestris*) has long, narrow fruits that are 2-2.5 mm wide and over 20 mm long. It grows upright or ascending, and occupies dry habitats.

Phenology: Late June-August.

Distribution: Occurs intermittently from east-central Idaho, the south edge of the Salt Lake Desert in Utah,



southern Nevada and south-central Wyoming. In

Above: *Astragalus diversifolius*
by Jeanne Janish from Hitchcock and Cronquist 1961



Above: *Astragalus diversifolius* by Bonnie Heidel

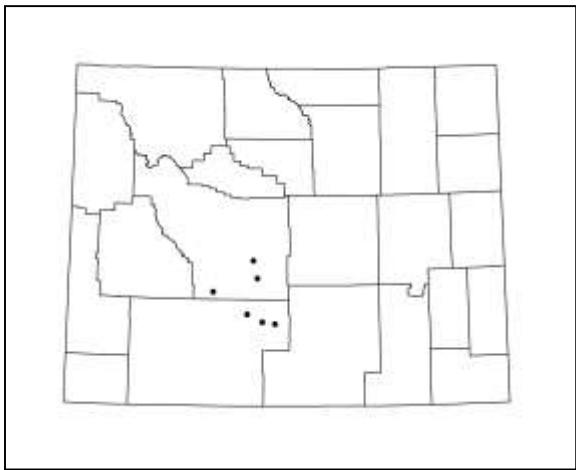
Wyoming, known from the Great Divide Basin and Sweetwater River drainage (Fremont and Sweetwater counties).

Habitat: Moist alkaline soil (Hitchcock and Cronquist 1961). Wyoming populations are in alkaline meadows, shores and flats around playa lakes, swales and drainages, on subirrigated silt loams, with *Carex praeegracilis*, *Cirsium tioganum* var. *coloradense*,

Pyrocoma lanceolata, *Spartina gracilis* and *Sporobolus airoides* (Heidel 2009, 2015).



Above: Rangewide distribution of *Astragalus diversifolius*



Above: Wyoming distribution of *Astragalus diversifolius*

Occurrences in Wyoming: Known from 6 extant occurrences in Wyoming (last observed in 2014) and a vague historical record that may correspond to Sweetwater River drainage records.

Abundance: Total numbers in the Great Divide Basin were estimated at 8000 plants, and in the Sweetwater River drainage at 300-600 plants (Heidel 2009, 2015).

Trends: Unknown.

Protection Status: One occurrence on state and federal lands is in the Chain Lakes Wildlife Habitat Management area, and the other two occurrences are on public lands managed for multiple use.



Above: *Astragalus diversifolius* habitat by Bonnie Heidel

Threats: Potentially affected by uranium mining (Heidel et al. 2014) and water developments (Heidel 2015).

Managed Areas: Occurs on lands managed by the BLM Rawlins Field Office.

References:

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