ASTRAGALUS DRABELLIFORMIS
BIG PINEY MILKVETCH
FABACEAE

Status:
US Fish & Wildlife Service: None; formerly a C2 Candidate for listing under the Endangered Species Act.
Agency Status: Rock Springs BLM: Special status.

Heritage Rank:
Global: G2G3 State: S2S3
WYND Plant List: State endemic (Watch list)

Description: Mat-forming perennial herb with flowering stems mostly less than 2.5 cm high. Leaves are silvery-hairy, spoon-shaped to linear, 5-25 mm long and simple (not divided into 3 or more leaflets as in most other species of Astragalus). Flowers are pink-purple, less than 7 mm long, and loosely arranged in a 1-4 flowered raceme. Fruit pods are approximately 5.5-8.5 mm long, thinly hairy, and triangular in cross section with a distinctly keeled ridge on the lower edge and a groove on the upper edge (Barneby 1964; Fertig et al. 1994).

Similar Species: Astragalus simplicifolius forms dense, bun-like mats and has larger flowers (10-16 mm long). A. spatulatus differs in having fruits that are 2-edged in cross section (flattened laterally) and has slightly larger flowers (6-9 mm long).


Distribution: Endemic to the Green River Basin in Sublette County, WY (reported from Lincoln Co., but all specimens I have observed are based on immature A. spatulatus).

Habitat: Rocky areas with low cover within sagebrush and cushion plant communities on sandstone, stony clay, badlands, and barren clay slopes and ridges at 6900-7200 feet.

Occurrences in Wyoming: Currently known from over 30 occurrences, all within a relatively small geographic area. Surveys by Ron Kass for BLM suggest that many of these occurrences are confluent and may represent 1 to several extremely large populations.

Abundance: Populations are often locally abundant and tolerant of many surface disturbances. The total population may number over 1 million (Fertig et al. 1998).
Above: *Astragalus drabelliformis* (in foreground by red pencil) and habitat in Billy Canyon, north of Big Piney. Photo by Dennis Horning.

**Trends:** Populations are probably stable to possibly increasing. This species is capable of reestablishing rapidly in disturbed areas (Steve Laster, Pinedale BLM, personal communication).

**Protection status:** All known occurrences are on public lands managed for multiple use. This species was formerly a C2 candidate for listing under the Endangered Species Act.

**Threats:** Some colonies may be impacted by habitat loss and vehicle trampling associated with natural gas development and exploration activities. These threats, however, have proven to be less significant than initially suspected.

**Managed Areas:** Occurs on lands managed by the BLM Pinedale Field Office and Bridger-Teton National Forest.

**References:**


Land Management by the Wyoming Natural Diversity Database, Laramie, WY.


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