

-State Species Abstract-  
-Wyoming Natural Diversity Database-

*BESSEYA ALPINA*  
ALPINE KITTENTAILS  
Family: Scrophulariaceae

Status:

US Fish & Wildlife Service: None.

Agency Status: None.

Heritage Rank:

Global: G4 State: S1

WYNDD Plant List: Regional endemic  
(Medium conservation priority).

Description: Alpine kittentails is a perennial herb with woolly or glabrous stems 5-15 cm tall. The basal leaf blades are heart-shaped, 2-5 cm long, and lightly toothed on the margins. Stem leaves are alternate, sessile, and bract-like. Flowers with a two-lobed, violet-purple corolla and two elongate, drab-colored stamens arranged in a woolly, spike-like, terminal inflorescence (Fertig 1993; Harrington 1954; Duft and Moseley 1989).

Similar Species: *Besseya wyomingensis* lacks petals and has more conspicuous purple stamens. *Phacelia sericea* has dense spikes of purple flowers and larger, pinnately-divided leaves. *Veronica wormskjoldii* has dark blue flowers and numerous, oppositely-arranged stem leaves (Dorn 1992).

Flowering/Fruiting Period: June to August. This species is one of the first alpine plants to bloom after snow melts (Duft and Moseley 1989).

Distribution: Regional endemic of SC Wyoming, C Colorado, and N New Mexico. In Wyoming, known only from the alpine peaks of the Snowy Range in the Medicine Bow Mountains (Albany and Carbon counties).

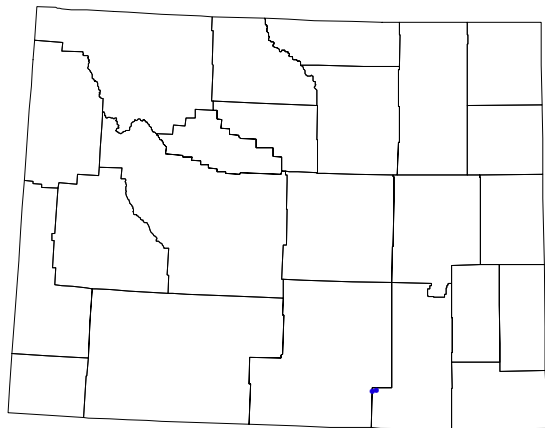


Above: *Besseya alpina* by W. Fertig.

Habitat: Occurs on rocky boulder and talus slopes, and alpine meadows of *Geum rossii* turf or cushion plants (often below snowfields) at elevations of 11200-11800 feet.

Occurrences in Wyoming: Known from one extant occurrence (last surveyed in 1993) and one historical record (last observed in 1900).

Abundance: 3 small subpopulations found on Medicine Bow Peak in 1993 contained 1-12



Wyoming distribution of *Besseya alpina*.

plants apiece. Additional plants may have been present, but could not be distinguished from vegetative specimens of *Besseya wyomingensis*. Nelson (1984) reports the species as "common" in the Snowy Range.

Trends: Low population numbers in 1993 suggest that the species may be declining, although more current census information is needed to confirm this trend.

Protection status: Part of one occurrence is within the Medicine Bow Peak Special Botanical Area. Remaining colonies are on public lands managed for multiple use.

Threats: Threats are probably low overall, although some colonies could be impacted by heavy recreational use. Most of the habitat of this species is no longer grazed.

Managed Areas: Occurs on Medicine Bow National Forest.

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