

CAREX OREOCHARIS

MOUNTAIN-LOVING SEDGE
CYPERACEAE

Status:

US Fish & Wildlife Service: None.

Agency Status: None.

Heritage Rank:

Global: G3 State: S1

WYNDD Plant List: Regional endemic
(Medium conservation priority)

Description: Mountain-loving sedge is a densely-tufted, non-rhizomatous, perennial graminoid with stout culms 10-35 cm tall that are roughened just below the spike. Leaves are clustered near the base and are shorter than the culm. Leaf blades are 1-2 mm wide at the base, but become deeply channeled (through folding) towards the narrow tips. The inflorescence consists of a single, terminal spike 2-4 cm long divided into an upper, narrow staminate portion 1-2 cm long and a wider, basal pistillate portion. Flowering scales are pale straw-colored and oblong-lanceolate, with the lowermost pistillate scale of the inflorescence bearing a conspicuous, bract-like awn. The perigynia are oblong-obovoid, 4-4.5 mm long, short-hairy, and faintly 2-nerved. Pistillate flowers bear 3 stigmas and produce 3-sided achenes (Dorn 1992; Hermann 1970; Holm 1900).

Identification Comments: Mature perigynia and growth-form needed for positive identification.

Similar Species: *Carex filifolia* and *C. elynoides* have needle-shaped leaf blades less than 0.8 mm wide at the base, awnless



Above: *Carex oreocharis* from Holm (1900).

flowering scales, and smooth, rounded culms below the spike. *C. nardina* has finely-stripped perigynia and a short, inconspicuous staminate section of the terminal spike. Other single-spiked sedge species in Wyoming have creeping rhizomes or 2-sided fruits with 2 stigmas (Dorn 1992).

Flowering/Fruiting Period: July-August.
Reproduces by seed.

Distribution: Regional endemic of the southern Rocky Mountains from southeastern Wyoming to northern Arizona (Hermann 1970). In Wyoming, it is known only from the southern Laramie Range in Albany and Laramie counties.

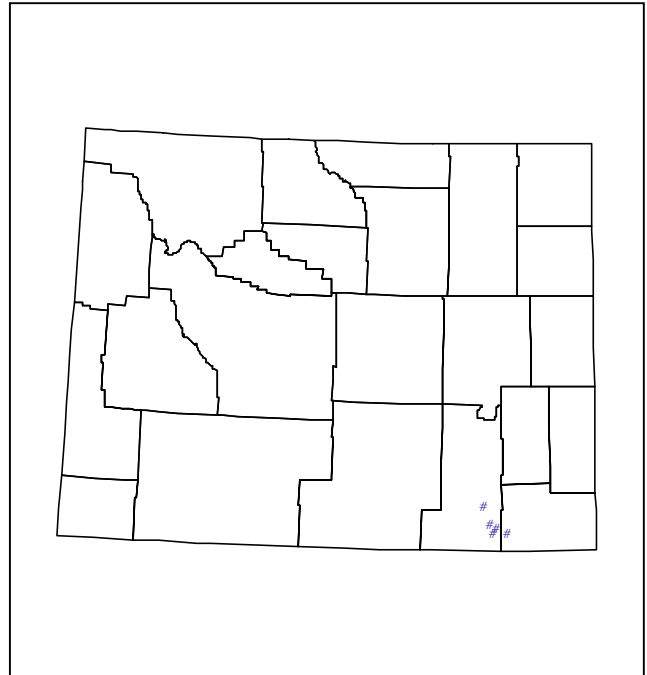
Habitat: In Wyoming, this species occurs primarily on dry, gravelly, rolling plains of Sherman Granite in communities dominated by *Artemisia tripartita* var. *rupicola* and *Muhlenbergia filiculmis* at elevations of 7000-8300 feet.

Mountain-loving sedge may be locally abundant and often is co-dominant with *Muhlenbergia filiculmis* on dry, west-facing gravelly plains. Plants are typically clumped, although the clumps may have a patchy distribution. Johnson (in Hermann 1970) reported that the species is grazed by cattle in the Pole Mountain area of the southern Laramie Range and is probably moderately palatable. Associated species include *Gentiana affinis* var. *bigelovii*, *Eriogonum jamesii* var. *flavescens*, *Phlox hoodii*, *Stipa comata*, *Artemisia frigida*, *Allium cernuum*, *Sedum lanceolatum*, *Eriogonum flavum*, *Poa secunda*, and *Oxytropis sericea*.

Occurrences in Wyoming: Known from 4 occurrences in Wyoming, all relocated or discovered since 1995 (most recently observed in 1999).

Abundance: Populations are locally abundant (numbering in the hundreds to low thousands) and this species is often a co-dominant in grassland communities. Much additional habitat is available in the southern Laramie Range.

Trends: Known populations appear to be stable, although long-term trend data are lacking.



Wyoming distribution of *Carex oreocharis*.

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

Threats: Known occurrences are seasonally grazed by livestock, but do not appear to be adversely impacted, at least in moist years.

Managed Areas: Known occurrences are found on Medicine Bow National Forest (Laramie RD) and Curt Gowdy State Park.

References:

Burke, M. 2000. Survey of selected rare plant species in the Pole Mountain area of Medicine Bow National Forest. Report prepared for University of Wyoming Botany Department.

Dorn, R.D. 1992. Vascular Plants of Wyoming, second edition. Mountain West Publishing, Cheyenne, WY.

Hermann, F.J. 1970. Manual of the Carices of the Rocky Mountains and Colorado Basin. Agriculture Handbook 374: 1-397. USDA Forest Service, Washington DC.

Holm, T. 1900. Studies in the Cyperaceae XII. Segregates of *Carex filifolia* Nutt. American Journal of Science 9: 355-363.

Welp, L., W.F. Fertig, G.P. Jones, G.P. Beauvais, and S.M. Ogle. 2000. Fine filter analysis of the Bighorn, Medicine Bow, and Shoshone National Forests in Wyoming. Wyoming Natural Diversity Database, Laramie, WY.

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