

-State Species Abstract-
-Wyoming Natural Diversity Database-

CHIONOPHILA JAMESII
ROCKY MOUNTAIN SNOWLOVER
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: Rocky Mountain snowlover is a glabrous or minutely pubescent herb with a single stem 5-10 cm tall. The basal leaves are spoon-shaped, thick and entire, while the stem leaves are much reduced and linear. Flowers are arranged in a one-sided, dense, spike-like inflorescence and are greenish white to cream-colored. The 10-12 mm long, snapdragon-like corolla is 2-lipped and somewhat flattened horizontally. Flowers contain 4 fertile, anther-bearing stamens and a fifth, sterile, glabrous staminode (Fertig 1993; Harrington 1954; Duft and Moseley 1989).

Similar Species: Alpine species of *Penstemon* differ in having blue or purple flowers arranged in dense whorls or open panicles and in having bearded staminodes. Vegetatively, *Polygonum bistortoides* differs in having longer basal leaves with prominent mid-veins (Fertig 1993).

Flowering/Fruiting Period: July-August.

Distribution: Regional endemic of the Front Range, extending from southeastern Wyoming to northern New Mexico. In Wyoming, known only from the alpine peaks of the Snowy Range (Medicine Bow Mountains) in Albany and Carbon counties.



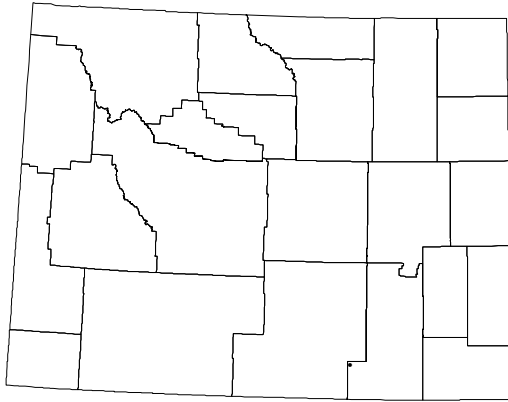
Above: *Chionophila jamesii* by W. Fertig.

Habitat: Moist grassy slopes or flats, often in rocky or gravelly soil at 10500-11500 feet. Soils are bare or sparsely vegetated and moist from recent snow melt and have well-developed cryptogammic crusts composed of lichens, algae, and mosses (Fertig 1993).

Occurrences in Wyoming: Known from a single, extensive occurrence consisting of at least 30 essentially continuous subpopulations in an area of 4 x 4.5 miles.

Abundance: Subpopulations range in size from ca 10 to several hundred. Total Wyoming population conservatively estimated at 5000-10000 plants by Fertig (1993).

Trends: Probably stable.



Above: Wyoming distribution of *Chinophila jamesii*.

Harrington, H. D. 1954. Manual of the Plants of Colorado. Sage Books, Chicago, IL.

Nelson, B. E. 1984. Vascular Plants of the Medicine Bow Range. Jelm Mountain Press, Laramie, WY.

Scott, R.W. 1997. The Alpine Flora of the Rocky Mountains. Volume 1 The Middle Rockies. University of Utah Press, Salt Lake City, UT.

Author: Walter Fertig

Updated: 00-11-24

Protection status: Part of the Snowy Range occurrence is found within the Medicine Bow Peak Special Interest Area.

Threats: Threats low at present, although trampling from hikers and sheep grazing may be minor impacts.

Managed Areas: Occurs in Medicine Bow National Forest.

References:

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

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

Duft, J.E. and R.K. Moseley. 1989. Alpine Wildflowers of the Rocky Mountains. Mountain Press Publ. Co., Missoula, MT.

Fertig, W. 1993. Survey of alpine plant species of special concern in the Medicine Bow Peak Special Botanical Area. Report prepared for the Medicine Bow National Forest by the Wyoming Natural Diversity Database, Laramie, WY.