

-State Species Abstract-
-Wyoming Natural Diversity Database-

CUSCUTA OCCIDENTALIS
WESTERN DODDER
Family: CUSCUTACEAE

Status:

US Fish & Wildlife Service: None.

Agency Status: None.

Heritage Rank:

Global: G5 State: S1

WYNDD Plant List: Peripheral (Low Conservation Priority)

Description: Western dodder is a rootless, annual parasitic herb with slender, twining, yellowish stems. The inflorescence is a compact to loose cluster of whitish, nearly sessile flowers, each 2-3 mm long. The corolla has 5 lance-shaped, pointed-tipped lobes and lacks scale-like appendages on its inner surface (below the oval anthers). Stigmas are ball-headed (capitate). The fruit is a thin-walled globose capsule (Cronquist et al. 1984; Welsh et al. 1993).

Synonyms: *Cuscuta californica* var. *breviflora*.

Identification Comments: Twining, rootless, yellowish stems and flowers with capitate stigmas and no scales on the inner wall of the corolla are diagnostic.

Similar Species: Other *Cuscuta* spp. in Wyoming have long, slender stigmas or blunt-lobed corollas with scale-like appendages on the inner surface near the base of the stamens (Dorn 1992).

Flowering/Fruiting Period: June-August.

Distribution: Occurs from Washington to California, east to Idaho, western Wyoming, and Colorado. In Wyoming, known from the Green River Basin and Overthrust Belt in Lincoln and Sweetwater counties.

Habitat: Wyoming populations occur in mountain big sagebrush communities at 6400-7600 feet. This species has been found parasitizing *Aster glaucodes* and *Artemisia ludoviciana*.

Occurrences in Wyoming: Known from a single extant record (observed in 1997) and one historical record (1936) in Wyoming.

Abundance: Not known.

Trends: Not known.

Protection status: One population is found within Fossil Butte National Monument.

Threats: *Cuscuta* spp. are considered agricultural pests and may be subject to eradication efforts.

Managed Areas: Occurs in Fossil Butte National Monument and possibly in the BLM Rock Springs Field Office.

References:

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