**Cuscuta Occidentalis**  
**Western Dodder**  
Family: CUSCUTACEAE

**Status:**  
US Fish & Wildlife Service: None.  
Agency Status: None.  
Heritage Rank:  
Global: G5 State: S1  
WYNDDB 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:**


Fertig, W. 2000. Vascular plant species checklist and rare plants of Fossil
Butte National Monument. Report prepared for the National Park Service Northern Colorado Plateau Network by the Wyoming Natural Diversity Database, Laramie, WY.


Author: Walter Fertig
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