ERIOPHORUM SCHEUCHZERI
SCHEUCHZER COTTON-GRASS
Family: Cyperaceae

Status:
US Fish & Wildlife Service: None
Agency Status: None

Heritage Rank:
Global: G5  State: S1
WYNDD Plant List: disjunct (medium conservation priority)

Description: Scheuchzer cotton-grass is a perennial graminoid with long-creeping rhizomes and non-tufted culms 10-30 cm tall. Lower culm leaves are few and consist of inflated sheaths and slender channeled blades about 1 mm wide. The uppermost leaf consists of a dark-tipped, bladeless sheath and is located near the middle of the culm. The inflorescence is a single terminal globose spikelet with narrow, blackish-green, lance-shaped scales that lack a prominent membranous margin. Flowers have anthers 0.5-1 mm long, brown or blackish achenes with an abruptly-pointed style, and numerous white bristles that elongate in fruit to form a "cotton-ball" head (Cronquist et al. 1977; Dorn 1992; Hitchcock et al. 1969).

Similar Species: Eriophorum chamissonis is a taller plant with reddish bristles, dark scales with a prominent pale margin, and anthers more than 1 mm long. E. callitrix has densely tufted culms (without rhizomes). Other Eriophorum species in Wyoming have branched inflorescences with two or more spikelets.

Flowering/Fruiting Period: July-August.

Distribution: Circumboreal, in North America extending across Alaska and Canada and south to Newfoundland, southern Alberta, and scattered locations in the Rocky Mountains of Montana, western Wyoming, and northern Utah. In Wyoming, known from the Wind River and Absaroka ranges in Fremont, Park, and Sublette counties.

Above: Wyoming distribution of E. scheuchzeri.

Habitat: Occurs in bogs, wet streambanks, and willow thickets in the lower alpine zone (Scott 1997). Elevation 9,500-11,000 feet.

Occurrences in Wyoming: Known from one historical and two extant occurrences in Wyoming, the most recent of which was observed in 1997.

Abundance: Not known, but presumed to be low.

Trends: Unknown.

Protection Status: Two occurrences are found in the Bridger and Fitzpatrick Wilderness Areas. Other known populations are on public lands managed for multiple use.
Threats: Could be impacted by high recreation use or alteration of alpine wetland habitats.

Managed Areas: Found in Bridger-Teton and Shoshone National Forests.

References:


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