

***Astragalus pulsiferae* Gray**
var. ***suksdorfii* (Howell) Barneby**
Ames' milk-vetch
Fabaceae (Pea Family)

Astragalus pulsiferae* var. *suksdorfii
Ames' milk-vetch

Status: State Endangered, USFWS Species of Concern
Rank: G4T3S1

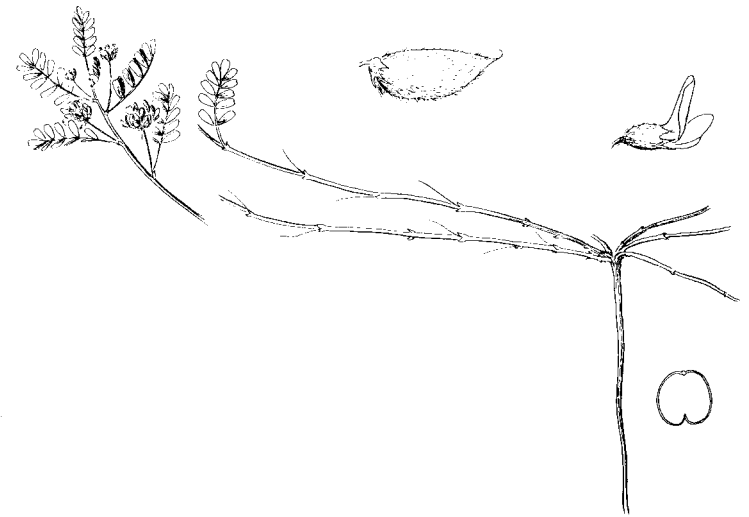
General Description: Prostrate, tap-rooted perennial with several slender stems arising from a root crown at or just below ground level. Individual stems can be 8 inches or greater in length. The leaves consist of 7-15 leaflets. The leaflets are generally less than 1/2 inch in length. The flowers are quite small and are white to cream with purple. Individual racemes are 4-10 flowered. The keel is 1/8 to 1/4 inch and the banner is <3/8 inch. The pods are sessile (not on a stipe), inflated and are greater than 1/2 inch in length.

Identification Tips: This is the only prostrate member of the genus that occurs within the Washington portion of its range, i.e. in western Klickitat County.

Phenology: Individual plants flower from mid-May to early July. The first fruits may appear as early as mid-June.

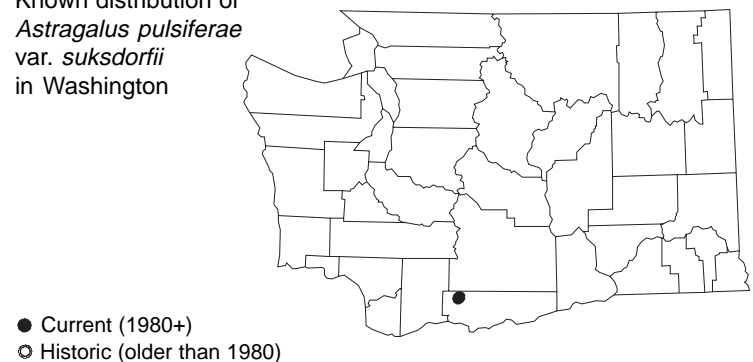
Range: The distribution of this taxon is bicentric. It occurs in southcentral Washington and in northern California. In WA, it is restricted to a very small area in western Klickitat County in the Eastern Cascades physiographic province.

Habitat: This taxon occurs on generally flat or very gentle terrain in coarse textured substrates. It occurs in relatively open ponderosa pine forests with bitterbrush (*Purshia tridentata*). The elevation of WA sites is 1800 to 1900 feet. Associated species include prairie lupine (*Lupinus lepidus*), goosefoot violet (*Viola purpurea*), yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*), goldenweed (*Haplopappus bloomeri*), pussypaws (*Spraguea umbellata*), and needlegrass (*Stipa occidentalis*).



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Known distribution of
Astragalus pulsiferae
var. *suksdorfii*
in Washington



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John Gamon



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Ecology: This taxon occurs in open ponderosa pine forest which is undoubtedly subject to periodic fires. The microsites, however, do not have a lot of vegetation, so fires may not burn too intensely at ground level. Like many other rare members of the genus, it takes advantage of disturbed ground, such as dirt roads, yet it does not seem to successfully expand its range. Factors responsible for its limited distribution are unknown.

State Status Comments: In Washington, *Astragalus pulsiferae* var. *suksdorfii* is limited to an area of less than 2 square miles. The population consists of approximately 1000 individuals, with various size classes of individuals well represented. Individuals appear to reproduce successfully, yet seemingly suitable habitat remains unoccupied. Much of its habitat is subject to timber and range management practices.

Inventory Needs: Additional inventory is needed on Conboy National Wildlife Refuge and nearby private and state lands.

Threats and Management Concerns: The most significant threat in Washington has been fire suppression, which has led to increasing tree and shrub cover as well as a build-up of the herbaceous layer and leaf / needle litter. Timber harvest, road construction, and grazing may all threaten individual plants and portions of populations both directly through harming individuals, and indirectly, through an accompanying increase in weedy species.

References:

Hitchcock, C.L., A. Cronquist, M. Ownbey, and J.W. Thompson. 1961. *Vascular Plants of the Pacific Northwest, Part 3: Saxifragaceae to Ericaceae*. University of Washington Press, Seattle. 614 pp.