

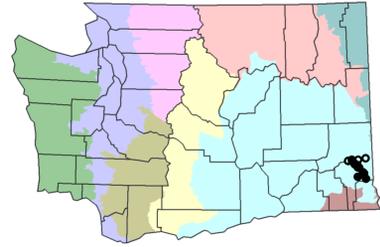
# ***Astragalus riparius*** Barneby

Piper's milk-vetch

Fabaceae - pea family

status: State Endangered, BLM sensitive

rank: G1G2 / S1S2



**General Description:** Erect taprooted perennial, grayish green to greenish in color, stems tufted, 4-15 cm long. Leaves pinnate, 1-2 dm long, with 21-33 linear-oblong to oblanceolate leaflets that are 4-21 mm long and hairless above. Stipules 2.5-7 mm long, becoming papery, clasping the stem below but not fused.

**Floral Characteristics:** Racemes with 10-20 flowers on long peduncles (14-30 cm) extending above the leaves. Flowers greenish white to cream-colored, drying to yellowish white, the banner 11.5-14 mm, curved back, with an irregular margin, the wings 1-4 mm longer than the banner. Calyx 7-10.5 mm long, black with minute long hairs, teeth 2-5 mm long. Flowers May to June.

**Fruits:** Pods sessile, erect, hairless, 1.5-2.5 cm long, 6-10 mm thick, oblong, nearly straight, broadly rounded at the base and contracted to a sharp beak at the tip, slightly obcompressed, becoming leathery or almost woody with age. Fruits persist through fall and winter.

**Identification Tips:** Most easily identified with mature fruits. To determine if the stipules are fused, look at the very lowest stipule on the stem. *A. reventus* is similar, but with the wing petals shorter than the banner, and pods covered with short, soft hairs. *A. arrectus* has a similar flower but stalked pods; stalks are only slightly longer than the calyx, 2.5-8 mm.

**Range:** Regional endemic along the lower Snake River and its tributaries between the mouths of the Clearwater and Tucannon Rivers. Historically in ID.

**Habitat/Ecology:** Dry bluffs, canyon banks, rocky slopes, and grasslands, from 200 to 700 m (700-2200 ft) elevation. Associated species include snowberry (*Symphoricarpos albus*), bluebunch wheatgrass (*Pseudoroegneria spicata*), lupine (*Lupinus polyphyllus*, *L. sericeus*), yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*), arrowleaf balsamroot (*Balsamorhiza sagittata*), Idaho fescue (*Festuca idahoensis*), and cheatgrass (*Bromus tectorum*). This species combines characteristics of *A. reventus* and *A. palousensis*; it may have originated as a hybrid population, but now is a self-perpetuating species.

**Comments:** *Astragalus riparius* is no longer abundant as reported by Hitchcock et al. (1955-1969). It has been extirpated from ID. Studies addressing the biology of the taxon are needed.



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