

## *Carex chordorrhiza* (Ehrhart L. F.)

cordroot sedge  
Cyperaceae (Sedge Family)

**Status:** State Sensitive

**Rank:** G5S1

**General Description:** Glabrous, creeping, sedge with single or several stems 4 to 12 in. (10 to 30 cm) tall that arise from creeping rhizomes and can reach up to 3¼ feet (1 m). The older stems are lengthy and spread across the ground. The leaves that occur at the base of fertile stems are narrow, usually inrolled, and up to 16 in. (4 dm) long. The non-flowering stems usually have longer, more abundant leaves. The flowers are borne in 3 to 8 small aggregate spikes at stem tips. Each spike has male flowers above and 1 to 5 female flowers (perigynia) below. The many-veined perigynia are egg-shaped; the scales are broadly egg-shaped and generally the same length as the perigynia that they subtend. The achene is lens-shaped.

**Identification Tips:** As with all sedges, positive identification requires the use of a technical key. The strict peatland habitat and small heads help to distinguish the species. *C. simulata* also occurs in mires but has a smaller perigynia with more than 5 perigynia per spike.

**Phenology:** Cordroot sedge flowers from early June through July.

**Range:** The species is known from Alaska to Labrador and Newfoundland, southward to northern British Columbia, Saskatchewan, Iowa, Indiana, New York and Maine. Also known in Finland and Scandinavia. In Washington, *C. chordorrhiza* was only recently found in the Okanogan National Forest, far from its previously-known range.

**Habitat:** Occurs primarily in wetlands, peatlands, sphagnum bogs and lakeshores. The species is a circumpolar plant of boreal and subarctic regions and occurs at low to middle altitude. *C. chordorrhiza* is a component of the vegetation of transition mires such as mesotrophic peatlands (poor fen) and characteristically occurs in low sedge vegetation. It is usually associated with other sedges (*Carex spp.*), cotton-sedges (*Eriophorum spp.*), western red cedar (*Thuja plicata*) and willow (*Salix spp.*).

**Ecology:** This species is dependent upon a functioning hydrological regime.

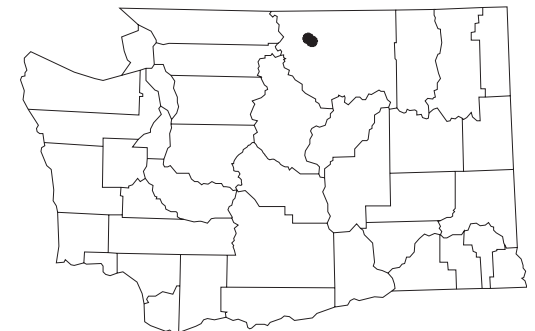
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cordroot sedge



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Known distribution of  
*Carex chordorrhiza*  
in Washington



- Current (1980+)
- Historic (older than 1980)

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Photo by Robert Moseley



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**State Status Comments:** One recent sighting in Okanogan National Forest, Okanogan County.

**Inventory Needs:** Additional inventory needed to determine range size. Little is known regarding its reproduction and dispersal.

**Threats and Management Concerns:** Hydrologic change, timber harvesting and grazing pose the greatest threats to the species.

**References:**

Taylor, T.M.C. 1983. *The Sedge Family of British Columbia*.  
Handbook No. 43, British Columbia Provincial Museum. Victoria,  
B.C. 375 pp.