

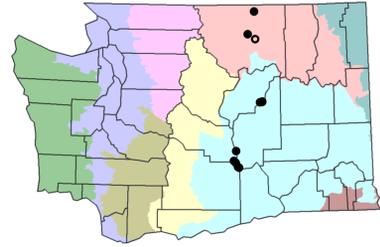
Eleocharis rostellata (Torr.) Torr.

beaked spike-rush

Cyperaceae - sedge family

status: State Sensitive, BLM strategic, USFS strategic

rank: G5 / S2



General Description: Densely tufted, mat-forming perennial. Stems (2) 4-10 dm tall or more, somewhat flattened above, 1-2 mm wide, some of them rooting from sterile spikelets at the end of tips. Leaves all basal, reduced to sheaths that surround the lower portions of the culms..

Floral Characteristics: Spikelets solitary and terminal, ovoid, 5-17 mm long, with 20-40 flowers. Floral scales equal to or longer than the achene; lowest scale empty. Stigmas 3. Perianth bristles brown, equaling achene, densely barbed. Flowers June to August.

Fruits: Achenes light greenish to medium brown, 3-angled or planoconvex, smooth or slightly roughened, 1.9-2.8 mm long, including the prominent, persistent style base or tubercle. The style base is pale to dark brown, up to 0.5 mm long, and confluent with the achene body (not forming an apical cap).

Identification Tips: *Eleocharis rostellata* is more robust than most *Eleocharis* ssp. in WA. *E. suksdorfiana* is similar but distinguished by its long horizontal rhizomes and absence of rooting culm tips. Additionally, the achenes of *E. suksdorfiana* are finely longitudinally ridged, but *E. rostellata* achenes are typically slightly wrinkled.

Range: Vancouver Island, Nova Scotia, Ontario, throughout much of the continental U.S., and south to northern Mexico, the greater Antilles, and the South American Andes.

Habitat/Ecology: Salt marshes along the coast and alkaline or highly calcareous sites inland, often around hot springs and wet calcareous or brackish fens. In WA this species is known from stream banks, lake margins, springs, and marshes east of the Cascade crest. Associated species include willow (*Salix exigua*), bulrushes (*Schoenoplectus pungens* and others), sedges (*Carex hystericina*, *C. pellita* and others), St. John's-wort (*Hypericum scouleri*), and rushes (*Juncus arcticus*, *J. nodosus*). Elevations in WA : 130-560 m (440-1850 ft). *Eleocharis rostellata* is an important early colonizer of calcareous wetlands in the eastern portion of its range.

Comments: Threats to the species include invasion of habitat by exotic species and an increase in the density of woody species. This taxon is rare in B.C., Ontario, Nova Scotia, and several U.S. states.

References: Flora of North America 1993+, vol. 23; Seischab & Bernard 1985.



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