

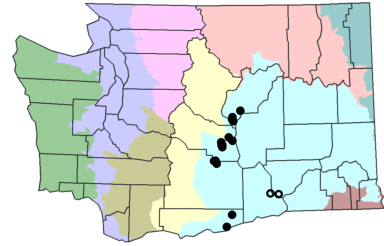
***Astragalus misellus* S. Watson var. *pauper* Barneby**

pauper milk-vetch

Fabaceae - pea family

status: State Sensitive, BLM sensitive

rank: G4T3 / S3



**General Description:** Low, rosette-forming perennial herb, 7-15 cm tall, from a taproot and branched crown. Stems spreading to ascending, 2.5-7 cm long. Leaves pinnate, 3-7 cm long. Leaflets 11-13, narrowly oblong, small, each 2-10 mm long, with short hairs on both upper and lower surfaces. Stipules not fused.

**Floral Characteristics:** Flowering stems ascending, 1.5-10 cm long, lengthening with maturity. Flowers small (about 7 mm long), 5-15 per stalk, whitish yellow. Flowers April to mid-May.

**Fruits:** Pods 2-8 per raceme, pendulous, attached by an obvious narrow stalk 2.5-5 mm long, nearly straight to curved about 90 degrees, 1.2-2.5 cm long and about 2.6-4 mm diameter at maturity, with short hairs. In cross section the pod is roughly triangular, and somewhat indented on the underside where the 2 halves of the pod meet. After it splits open, the small lentil-like seeds remain enclosed in the pod by a thin membrane. By late June fruits are mature.

**Identification Tips:** Most easily identified with mature fruits. Recognized by its small, semirosette forming habit; short stems, spreading or ascending, but not primarily erect; and stalked, pendulous pods that are 3-sided in cross section and fall from the plant when mature. To determine if the stipules are fused, look at the very lowest stipule on the stem.

**Range:** Endemic to eastern WA.

**Habitat/Ecology:** On open ridgetops and gentle upper slopes, rarely middle and lower slopes, mostly along the western margin of the Columbia Basin province. Associated species include sagebrush (*Artemisia rigida*, *A. tridentata*), rock buckwheat (*Eriogonum sphaerocephalum*), bluebunch wheatgrass (*Pseudoroegneria spicata*), Sandberg's bluegrass (*Poa secunda*), yellow fleabane (*Erigeron linearis*), phlox (*Phlox longifolia*, *P. hoodii*), bigseed biscuitroot (*Lomatium macrocarpum*), milk-vetch (*Astragalus purshii* and others), and hawksbeard (*Crepis occidentalis*, *C. atribarba*). Elevations: 150-1000 m (500-3280 ft).

**Comments:** The limited range and relatively narrow habitat requirements contribute to the species' current status. Soil disturbing activities such as grazing, road construction, and military training pose the greatest threat.

**References:** Barneby 1964.



photo by John Gamon



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