

# ***Cistanthe rosea*** (S. Watson) Hershkovitz

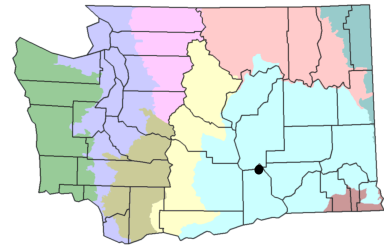
synonym: *Calyptidium roseum* S. Watson

rosy pussypaws

Portulacaceae - purslane family

status: State Threatened, BLM sensitive, USFS sensitive

rank: G5 / S1



**General Description:** Taprooted annual forb with 2 or more spreading to ascending stems 2-10 cm long. Leaves fleshy, spatula-shaped to oblanceolate. Basal leaves rosette-forming, 0.5-4 (5) cm long; stem leaves alternate, reduced.

**Floral Characteristics:** Flowers on pedicels, crowded in coiled, compound inflorescences. Sepals 2, unequal, nearly circular, (1) 2-3 mm long, with a thin, nongreen, membranous margin. Petals 2, white, 1 mm long or less. Stigmas 2, styles absent or very short; stamen 1. Flowers May to June.

**Fruits:** Capsules ovoid, about 2-3 mm, with 5-11 black, shining seeds.

**Identification Tips:** *Cistanthe umbellata*\* is somewhat similar, but has nearly sessile flowers with 4 petals; sepals 3-8 mm long, entirely nongreen and membranous; styles much longer, exerted from the corolla; 3 stamens; and stems 1 per rosette, usually without stem leaves.

**Range:** Central OR to central CA east of the Sierra Nevada, and east to NV, UT, WY, and southern ID. Disjunct in WA.

**Habitat/Ecology:** Sagebrush desert to arid montane forest, in sandy to gravelly soils. In CA, *Cistanthe rosea* occurs on alkaline soils in moist areas and occasionally in wetlands. In WA it grows in very dry shrub steppe, in low swales in dark sandy soil at 160 m (525 ft). In spring, the swale microsites may be moister than the surrounding habitat. Plants occur with other annuals, but not in areas with a well-developed cryptogam layer. Associated species include big sagebrush (*Artemisia tridentata*), cheatgrass (*Bromus tectorum*), Sandberg's bluegrass (*Poa secunda*), matted cryptantha (*Cryptantha circumscissa*), jagged chickweed (*Holosteum umbellatum*), spring whitlow-grass (*Draba verna*), Suksdorf's monkeyflower (*Mimulus suksdorfii*), microsteris (*Microsteris gracilis*), loeflingia (*Loeflingia squarrosa* ssp. *squarrosa*), and gilia (*Gilia leptomeria*).

**Comments:** There are 2 recent occurrences in WA; 1 had a solitary plant when it was observed. Both are located within the central portion of the Hanford Nuclear Reservation. Ground-disturbing activities, including those associated with hazardous materials cleanup, are the greatest threat to this species. It is also rare in OR and WY.

**References:** Flora of North America 1993+, vol. 4.



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