

**WELSH'S MILKWEED**  
*(Asclepias welshii)*

**STATUS:** Threatened with critical habitat ([52 FR 41435](#), October 28, 1987).

**SPECIES DESCRIPTION:** This member of the milkweed family (Asclepiadaceae) is a rhizomatous (with underground stems), herbaceous perennial, 10-40 inches (0.25-1 meter) tall, with large oval leaves. Flowers are cream-colored with a rose-tinged center, and bloom in June and July. The juvenile form has long, linear leaves, so is easily overlooked or misidentified. Due to the clonal nature of this species and its extensive, deep root system, surveys have consisted of counting stems emerging from underground rhizomes rather than counts of individual plants. Thus, we don't know how many individual plants comprise a population.

**HABITAT:** Sparsely vegetated semi-stabilized sand dunes and the lee slopes of actively drifting sand dunes derived from Navajo sandstone, at elevations from 4,700 to 6,250 feet (1432 to 1905 meters). Associated plant species include sand mulesears (*Wyethia scabra* ssp. *attenuata*), silvery sophora (*Sophora stenophylla*), giant sandreed (*Calamovilfa gigantea*), blowout grass (*Redfieldia flexuosa*), Indian ricegrass (*Achnatherum hymenoides*) and Gambel oak (*Quercus gambelii*). Plant communities adjacent to the dunes include pinyon pine (*Pinus edulis*), Utah juniper (*Juniperus utahensis*), sagebrush (*Artemisia* spp.), and ponderosa pine (*Pinus ponderosa*).

**RANGE: Current:** An estimated 72,000 stems are distributed over about 8,000 acres (3,075 hectares) in eight populations. About 98% of stems occur in the Coral Pink Sand Dunes, Kane County, Utah. The other populations are at Sands Hill, Kane County Utah; south of Monument Valley, Apache and Navajo counties, Arizona; north of Tuba City and west of Page, Coconino County, Arizona; and three populations at the west end of the Paria-Vermillion Cliffs Wilderness Area on the Utah/Arizona border, Coconino County, Arizona and Kane County, Utah. **Potential:** Southern Utah and northern Arizona where sand dunes derived from Navajo sandstone occur.

**REASONS FOR VULNERABILITY:** Off-highway vehicle (OHV) use can damage above ground portions of the plants - vegetative stems, flowers and fruits, the latter two of which decreases the reproductive success of individual plants. OHV activity may maintain habitat (open, active dunes) but benefit of this to the species is unsubstantiated. The inadequacy of regulatory mechanisms protecting the species is also a threat. This species' restricted range and highly specialized habitat requirements make it more vulnerable to threats.

**LAND MANAGEMENT/OWNERSHIP:** Bureau of Land Management, Navajo Nation, and Utah State Parks.

**NOTES:** All critical habitat occurs in Utah; for location see [52 FR 41435](#).

Protected by: the Arizona Native Plant Law; and Navajo Nation Code, Title 17 section 507 (Endangered Species).

A [Recovery Plan](#) for Welsh's Milkweed was approved in September 1992.

The most recent [5-Year Review](#) for this species was completed in August 2015.

Last Updated: August 16, 2016