



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Threatened and Endangered Species

Fassett's Locoweed

Oxytropis campestris var. *chartacea*



Fassett's locoweed is found in three counties in Wisconsin.

Fassett's locoweed is a federally *threatened species*. Threatened species are animals and plants that are likely to become endangered in the foreseeable future.

Endangered species are animals and plants that are in danger of becoming extinct. Identifying, protecting, and restoring endangered and threatened species is the primary objective of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's endangered species program.

Appearance - Fassett's locoweed is a 4- to 12-inch tall perennial herb of the pea family. It appears silvery-grey in color because of white, silky hairs that cover most of the plant. The flowers are pea-like, 1/2 to 3/4 inch long, and rose-pink to violet. An individual plant produces 1 to 20 stems, and each stem can have 10 to 20 flowers. The flowers produce numerous pale yellow pods that contain small black seeds. On a mature plant the leaves, which grow from a common base, are 3 to 8 inches long and are made up of 18 to 30 leaflets, each about an inch or less in length.

Range - Fassett's locoweed is known from a few sites in Bayfield, Portage, and Waushara counties in Wisconsin - and nowhere else in the world. Scientists think that the species is a remnant from the flora of 10,000 years ago when there were two large glacial lakes in the area.

Habitat - Fassett's locoweed grows on gentle, sand-gravel shoreline slopes around shallow lakes fed by groundwater seepage. These lakes are subject to frequent, large fluctuations in water levels.

Reproduction - Fassett's locoweed plants live for several years, reappearing each spring from underground perennial tap roots. The species reproduces entirely by seed. Flowers bloom from mid-May through mid-June. Both small and large bees have been observed visiting flowers, but the pollinator is not definitely known. Fassett's locoweed apparently depends on the open habitat provided during times of low lake levels and a large seed bank of dormant seeds in the soil for long-term population maintenance.



What is Fassett's locoweed?

Why is the Fassett's locoweed threatened?

Habitat Loss or Degradation - Residential development and recreational use around the small lakes where most Fassett's locoweed populations occur have caused disturbance and destruction of the species' habitat. Cattle grazing has also degraded the habitat and destroyed plants. Other threats to this species include irrigation of surrounding agricultural lands which diminishes lake levels by lowering the water table and pesticide runoff from agricultural and residential areas.

What is being done to prevent extinction of Fassett's locoweed?

Listing - Fassett's locoweed was added to the U.S. List of Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants in 1988.

Recovery Plan - The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service prepared a recovery plan that describes actions needed to help this plant survive. Those actions include protecting sites that now support Fassett's locoweed, providing information to landowners who may have Fassett's locoweed on their property, and using research results to develop and improve management and protection measures.

Research - Fassett's locoweed populations have been monitored to determine long-term population trends and to understand habitat and reproductive requirements. Studies on the viability and germination of seeds and the survivability of seedlings have been conducted to understand population structure and maintenance.

Habitat Protection - The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) owns two State Natural Areas that support Fassett's locoweed. Also, the Wisconsin DNR has a landowner contact program and through that program numerous private landowners have voluntarily agreed to protect the plants on their shorelines.

Public Education - Presentations are given to school groups, clubs and conservation organizations to educate people about this and other rare plants.

What can I do to help prevent the extinction of species?

Learn - Learn more about Fassett's locoweed and other endangered and threatened plants and animals. Understand how the destruction of habitat leads to loss of endangered and threatened species and our nation's plant and animal diversity. Tell others about what you have learned.

Join - Join a conservation group or volunteer at a local zoo, nature center, or wildlife refuge.

Plant Natives - Use native plants in landscaping and gardening and avoid the use of invasive plants that have been imported from other countries, such as purple loosestrife, dames rocket, and the shrub honeysuckles.

Protect - When recreating along lake shorelines, avoid trampling and damaging vegetation.