

# Deseret Milkvetch

*Astragalus desereticus*



Deseret Milkvetch / USFWS

## What does the Deseret milkvetch look like?

The Deseret milkvetch (*Astragalus desereticus*) is a perennial herb in the bean family. Individual plants are 2 - 6 inches tall and arise from the base of a 2 inch long herbaceous stem. The silvery-gray, pinnately compound leaves (feather-like arrangement with leaflets on both sides of a central stalk) are 2 - 4 inches long with 11 - 17 leaflets. Leaflets are elliptic to ovate in shape, with dense, silvery-gray, short hairs on both sides. Seed pods are 0.4 - 0.8 inches long and densely covered with lustrous hairs. The flower petals may be either completely white or whitish with pinkish



Seed Pods / Ben Franklin

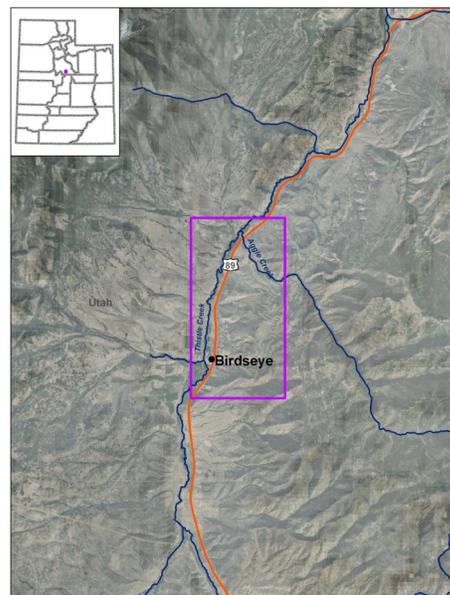
wings and a lilac keel-tip. Torrey's milkvetch (*Astragalus calycosus*) and Utah milkvetch (*A. utahensis*) are known to co-occur with Deseret milkvetch. This is important to note because milkvetches can often-times be confused when seed pods are not present.

## Where does the Deseret milkvetch occur?

The Deseret milkvetch is a narrow endemic occurring only on the sandy/gravelly hillsides of the Moroni Formation near Birdseye, Utah, in Utah County. The species occurs at elevations between 5,400 - 5,600 feet. Deseret milkvetch grows with pinyon pine, Utah juniper, sagebrush, scrub oak, and a variety of grasses.

## Legal Status under the Endangered Species Act

Deseret milkvetch was listed as threatened on October 20, 1999 (64 FR 56590).



Species Range / USFWS

## Does the Deseret milkvetch still need protection?

When we listed Deseret milkvetch, we believed residential development, highway widening, livestock grazing and trampling, and wildlife management (e.g. deer and elk trampling) were threats to the species and its habitat. By 2007, we proposed delisting because threats to the

species were not as significant as we had anticipated. In 2011, we completed a status review of the species using the best available information. We determined that although the species was rare, it did not meet the definition of threatened or endangered. We do not consider rarity alone a threat unless there are other threats to the species that exasperate the risk of rarity. Therefore, in our 2011 status review, we concluded the species should be delisted due to lack of threats.

### What have we done to recover the Deseret Milkvetch?

We have not developed a recovery plan for this species. In 2006, we worked with the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources, Utah Department of Transportation, and Utah School Institutional Trust Lands Administration to develop the Conservation Agreement for Deseret Milkvetch (*Astragalus desereticus*). In 2008, 2009, and 2010, the Utah Natural Heritage Program surveyed suitable habitat throughout the range of the species. We now know that the species occurs in much larger numbers than we knew at the time of listing.

### What do we need to do to recover the Deseret milkvetch?

In our last status review of the species (July 2011), we recommended the species be considered for delisting. However, there is still work to do before we are ready to remove the species from the List of Endangered and Threatened Plants.

Habitat and soil monitoring should be completed to determine the full extent of potential habitat for the species and facilitate post-delisting monitoring. We also need to work with partners to develop a post-delisting monitoring plan that includes annual monitoring geared toward assessing the impacts of livestock grazing on the plants and the habitat. Should livestock begin to degrade the habitat, fencing should be installed between the UDWR and private lands.

### More Information

To learn more about the Deseret milkvetch and conservation efforts on behalf of the species, please visit the following sites:



*USFWS Habitat Survey / Bekee Hotze*

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Endangered Species Program's website contains Federal Register notices and recovery documents: [www.fws.gov/endangered](http://www.fws.gov/endangered)

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Information, Planning and Conservation (IPaC) System: [ecos.fws.gov/ipac](http://ecos.fws.gov/ipac)

The Mountain-Prairie Regional Office's website: <http://www.fws.gov/mountain-prairie/species/plants/>

The Utah Field Office's website: [www.fws.gov/utahfieldoffice](http://www.fws.gov/utahfieldoffice)

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*Plant with flowers / Bekee Hotze, USFWS*

