



Summary of the

HARE-FOOTED LOCOWEED

As part of its commitment to the protection of species at risk, the Government of Canada proclaimed the *Species at Risk Act* (SARA) in 2003. In 2014, Hare-footed Locoweed was designated as Threatened by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC) and subsequently afforded protections under SARA. Through cooperation of landowners, additional population information was collected during surveys in 2017 and 2019; Environment and Climate Change Canada is recommending Hare-footed Locoweed be re-assessed by COSEWIC.

Species Description

Hare-footed Locoweed is a low-growing perennial forb from the pea family. Plants produce a stout taproot crowned by several clusters of leaves with silvery hairs and an array of purple pea-like flowers. Hare-footed Locoweed takes advantage of early spring moisture and flowers in late April to early June. Seed pods are covered in silvery hairs and ripen early in the year.

Habitat Needs

Hare-footed Locoweed occurs in the Foothills Fescue Grasslands of Alberta along the unglaciated Del Bonita Plateau and the adjacent Milk River Ridge. It is in these areas where pre-glacial gravels are exposed due to finer materials (silt, sand) being blown away by wind or washed downslope by rain. Hare-footed Locoweed is associated with rough fescue plant communities in open areas with less grass and forb cover, little to no litter, and fairly continuous groundcover of club mosses and lichens. Hare-footed Locoweed grows on thin gravelly soils in grasslands topping plateaus, buttes, ridges, and abandoned post-glacial river terraces. Ideal habitat is on or near the exposed edge of these features where vegetation is relatively sparse and soil is gravelly.

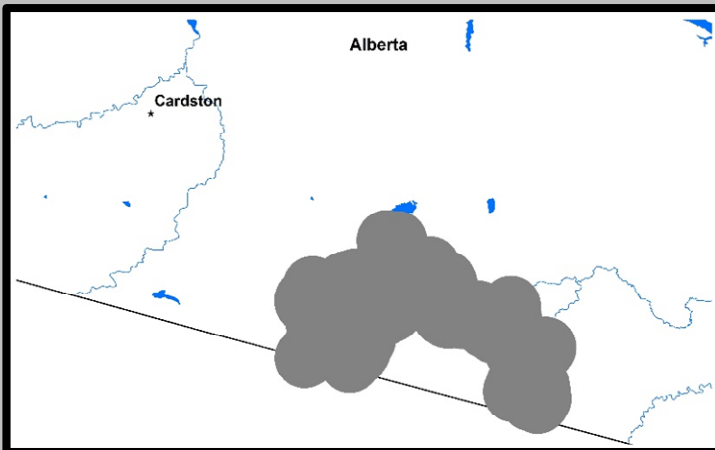
Plants can also be found in the grassland adjacent to these ridges and plateaus where there are openings with gravelly soils at the surface.



Hare-footed Locoweed habitat © Cheryl Bradley



Hare-footed Locoweed © Cheryl Bradley



Grey shading represents Canadian range of Hare-footed Locoweed

Population and Distribution

Hare-footed Locoweed has a limited distribution in North America and reaches the northern limit of its' range in southern Alberta, occurring along the US-Canada border from the Milk River Ridge to the Del Bonita Plateau. In Canada, there are 12 extant populations, 1 unconfirmed population, and 1 extirpated population within the County of Cardston, Alberta. The Canadian population is estimated to be over 48,000 plants.

Threats

Cultivation

Most of the cultivation in the areas surrounding Hare-footed Locoweed is historical, with much of the upland and valley edges having been turned to annual crop, hay, or tame forage. There is still some habitat remaining that may be cultivated. This would result in a further decline of Hare-footed Locoweed and its habitat, and would further decrease connectedness of populations.

Mining & Quarrying

Because Hare-footed Locoweed grows in gravelly soils, gravel extraction pits are a threat to Hare-footed Locoweed habitat and plants. Gravel pits are present at a few populations and thought to be responsible for the extirpation of at least one population.

Invasive Non-Native Plant Species

Invasive species (e.g. Crested Wheat Grass and Spotted Knapweed), occur across the entire range of Hare-footed Locoweed. These directly compete with native plants for space and resources, and can reduce habitat quality and decrease Hare-footed Locoweed populations.

Beneficial Management Practices

Grazing by livestock at levels appropriate for good range condition in fescue grassland may help maintain the grassland habitat needed by Hare-footed Locoweed. Overgrazing or overstocking of livestock may damage plants through trampling on the rootstocks. The sensitive soil crust (cover of lichen/moss) can also be damaged by hoof action, affecting the moisture content of the soil and increasing soil erosion. Integrated weed management and targeted removal of invasive non-native plants could directly reduce competition with Hare-footed Locoweed and therefore be beneficial.

For more information, please contact us directly at:

Canadian Wildlife Service – Prairie Region
Environment and Climate Change Canada
115 Perimeter Road
Saskatoon, SK S7N 0X4

You can also visit the following website for more information:
SARA Public Registry (<https://www.canada.ca/en/environment-climate-change/services/species-risk-public-registry.html>)

Cover photos:

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