

UTE LADIES TRESSES (*Spiranthes diluvialis*)**Description**

The Ute ladies'-tresses is a perennial; terrestrial orchid with stems 8 to 20 inches tall, arising from tuberously thickened roots. Its narrow leaves, 0.4 inches thick, can reach 11 inches in length. Basal leaves are the thickest and become reduced in size upward on the stem. The flowers consist of a few small white or ivory flowers clustered into a spike arrangement at the top of the stem. The species is characterized by stout, ringent (gaping at the mouth) flowers. The sepals and petals, except for the lip are rather straight. The lateral sepals are variably oriented, they often spread abruptly from the base of the flower; sepals are free to the base. Generally, it blooms from late July through August depending on location and climatic conditions.

Distribution

Ute ladies'-tresses orchid is found at scattered sites in western states including Colorado, Wyoming, Utah, Montana, Washington, Idaho, and Nevada. Nebraska is the eastern periphery of the species known range. It occurs in Nebraska at only one known site in the Niobrara River valley in Sioux County. It could occur in other river and stream valleys in far western Nebraska, but surveys have not found it.

Habitat

In Nebraska, the Ute ladies'-tresses grows within subirrigated wet meadows on lower alluvial terraces of the Niobrara River valley. Soils are slightly alkaline loams to sandy loams. Associated plant species include timothy (*Agrostis stolonifera*), saltgrass (*Distichlis spicata*), foxtail barley (*Hordeum jubatum*), Alkali plantain (*Plantago eriopoda*), and arrowgrass (*Triglochin maritima*). The species occurs in both hayed and grazed meadows.

Status

Global: G2-Imperiled. Federally Threatened. State Threatened. Nebraska: S1-Critically Imperiled. The species may have always had a limited distribution and abundance in Nebraska. Most occurrences are small, with 81% having less than 1000 plants and 95% occupying less than 50 acres and several historic populations in Utah and Colorado are presumed extirpated.

Management

Human manipulation may be necessary to create early- to mid- successional habitats. Early summer haying or grazing reduces competition and appears beneficial to Ute ladies'-tresses populations. Late summer haying or grazing is likely detrimental to the species. Application of herbicides near populations would also be detrimental to the species. Maintaining natural stream dynamics and hydrology, as well as naturally high ground water levels in the meadows is likely required for the long term persistence of this species. Ditching of meadows and introduction of exotic forage plants would be detrimental to the species.

More Information

<http://ecos.fws.gov/speciesProfile/profile/speciesProfile.action?sPCODE=Q2WA>