

**ARIZONA GAME AND FISH DEPARTMENT  
HERITAGE DATA MANAGEMENT SYSTEM**

**Plant Abstract**

**Element Code:** PDAST2E370

**Data Sensitivity:** Yes

**CLASSIFICATION, NOMENCLATURE, DESCRIPTION, RANGE**

**NAME:** *Cirsium wrightii* Gray  
**COMMON NAME:** Wright's Marsh Thistle, Wright's thistle  
**SYNONYMS:** *Carduus wrightii*, *Cnicus wrightii*  
**FAMILY:** Asteraceae (Compositae)

**AUTHOR, PLACE OF PUBLICATION:** A. Gray. Smithsonian Contributions to Knowledge  
Vol. 5, p. 101. 1853.

**TYPE LOCALITY:** U.S.A., Arizona [From protologue: around springs near San Bernardino,  
on the border of New Mexico and Sonora; Oct. (1290). Cochide Co., Arizona. (G.B. Ownbeys  
annotation is "Cochise Co., Arizona")].

**TYPE SPECIMEN:** NY Type 167537, incorporated from Herbarium of John Torrey. Collector  
Charles Wright #1290, 1851-1852.

**TAXONOMIC UNIQUENESS:** Approximately 200 species of *Cirsium* in North America,  
Eurasia, and North Africa; 92 species extant in North America (eFloras 2008). Most species  
of *Cirsium* in North America are native, although several may be considered locally invasive.  
A few are considered exotics, with general origins from Eurasia. In Arizona, *C. wrightii* is 1  
of 20 species of *Cirsium* found in the state, and one of the few thistles restricted to marshy  
areas; 2 of the 20 species are the exotic species *C. arvense* and *C. vulgare*. (eFloras 2008).

**DESCRIPTION:** A prickly biennial or weak monocarpic perennial plant with short black  
spines; the single stalk (stem) grows up to 1.0 - 2.5 m (3.2-8.2 ft.) tall, and is covered with  
succulent leaves (Flora of North America Editorial Committee 2006). Branching is erect,  
with strong decurrent (downward extending) leaves, and relatively small, numerous heads.  
The succulent basal leaves are ample, 30 cm or more long, sinuate or pinnatifid, weakly  
prickly, with short black spines that are nearly glabrous; the thin web-like wool tardily  
deciduous. Involucre prickles on the phyllaries are very small, less than 2.0 mm. Phyllaries  
are numerous with conspicuous glandular dorsal line. Corollas white or pink; style tips about  
3 mm long.

**AIDS TO IDENTIFICATION:** Erect with strict branching; strongly decurrent leaves;  
small, numerous heads with very small (less than 2.0 mm) prickles on the phyllaries. *Cirsium*  
*wrightii* differs from *C. texanum* in being an obligate wetland species with nearly glabrous  
leaves and stem and thick succulent leaves (New Mexico Rare Plant Technical Council 1999).

**ILLUSTRATIONS:**

Color photos (New Mexico Rare Plant Technical Council, 1999)

Color photo by Robert Sivinski and Richard Spellenberg ([CalPhotos](#))

**TOTAL RANGE:** Currently occurs only in New Mexico. Historically, occurred at 10 locations in New Mexico, 2 locations in Arizona, and 2 locations in Mexico. It has been extirpated from all historical locations in Arizona and Mexico, as well as two locations in New Mexico (USDI, FWS 2023). Those populations of *C. wrightii* that were thought to have occurred in Texas, were misidentified and the species likely was never present in Texas (USDI, FWS 2017). The currently extant populations have declined in population numbers and area over time (Sivinski 1996, 2012 – cited in USDI, FWS 2023), such that the current extant area is only approximately 43 ha (106 ac) (USDI, FWS 2023). Three of the extant populations are likely at risk of extirpation (USDI, FWS 2017).

**RANGE WITHIN ARIZONA:** Historically from San Bernardino Cienega on what is now the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, San Bernardino National Wildlife Refuge, Cochise County. This site is now considered extirpated.

**SPECIES BIOLOGY AND POPULATION TRENDS**

**GROWTH FORM:** Herbaceous biennial (completes development in 2 years, flowering in second) or weak monocarpic perennial (flowers, sets seed, then dies) herb.

**PHENOLOGY:** March-August

**BIOLOGY:** This species grows readily in cultivation, and has been known to hybridize.

**HABITAT:** This species is an obligate wetland species (USDA, Forest Service Region 3 2007). Wet, alkaline soils in spring seeps, cienegas, and marshy edges of streams and ponds, in otherwise semi-arid to arid areas.

**ELEVATION:** 3,450 - 8,500 ft (1130-2600 m).

**EXPOSURE:**

**SUBSTRATE:** Wet soil

**PLANT COMMUNITY:** Marsh

**POPULATION TRENDS:** Known from fewer than ten locations. During past surveys (1994) of New Mexico localities, Robert Sivinski was able to find the species at just two sites.

**SPECIES PROTECTION AND CONSERVATION**

**ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT STATUS:** LT (USDI, FWS 2023)  
[PT (USDI, FWS 2020)]  
[C\* (USDI, FWS 2019, 2016, 2015, 2014,  
2013, 2012, 20111, 2010)]  
[UR (USDI, FWS 2009)  
[PTN (Wild Earth Guardians 2008)]

**STATE STATUS:** None

**OTHER STATUS:** Forest Service Sensitive (USDA, FS Region  
3 2013, 2007, 1999) (in NM)

**MANAGEMENT FACTORS:** Dependent on wet soil. Introduction of insects as biological control for weedy thistles may pose a grave hazard for non-weedy thistle species. The effects of fire and livestock grazing on this species have not been studied

**PROTECTIVE MEASURES TAKEN:** Historic “Type” locality on San Bernardino Wildlife Refuge.

**SUGGESTED PROJECTS:** Survey historic and potential habitat. Taxonomy of this poorly known species should be reviewed as new populations are found.

**LAND MANAGEMENT/OWNERSHIP:** State, federal and private.

**SOURCES OF FURTHER INFORMATION****REFERENCES:**

- eFloras. 2008. Published on the Internet <http://www.efloras.org>. Missouri Botanical Garden, St. Louis, Missouri & Harvard University Herbaria, Cambridge, Massachusetts. (Accessed 17 November 2010)
- Flora of North America Editorial Committee. 2006. Flora of North America north of Mexico. Vol. 19. Magnoliophyta: Asteridae, part 6: Asteraceae, part 1. Oxford University Press, New York. xxiv + 579 pages. Online at [http://floranorthamerica.org/Volume\\_19](http://floranorthamerica.org/Volume_19)
- Kearney, T.H. and R.H. Peebles. 1960. Arizona flora. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition with supplement. University of California Press, Berkeley. p. 952.
- Munz, P. and K. Keck. 1970. A California Flora. University of California Press, Berkeley. p. 1274.
- NatureServe. 2010. NatureServe Explorer: An online encyclopedia of life [web application]. Version 7.1. NatureServe, Arlington, Virginia. Available <https://explorer.natureserve.org>. (Accessed: 17 November 2010)
- New Mexico Rare Plant Technical Council. 1999. New Mexico Rare Plants. Albuquerque, NM: New Mexico Rare Plants Home Page. <https://nmrareplants.unm.edu> (Latest update: 25 Apr 2023). (Accessed: 25 April 2023)

- Sivinski, R.C. 1996. Wright's marsh thistle (*Cirsium wrightii*); 1995 progress report, (Section 6, Segment 10). November 25, 1996. New Mexico Environment Department, Santa Fe, New Mexico, 10 pages.
- Sivinski, R. C. 2012. *Cirsium wrightii* Wrights marsh thistle: a 2012 population assessment. New Mexico Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department- Forestry Division report.
- USDA, Forest Service Region 3. 1999. Regional Forester's list of sensitive plants.
- USDA, Forest Service Region 3. 2007. Regional Forester's list of sensitive plants.
- USDA, Forest Service Region 3. 2013. Regional Forester's list of sensitive plants.
- USDI, Fish and Wildlife Service. 2009. Endangered and threatened wildlife and plants; 90-day finding on a petition to list *Cirsium wrightii* (Wright's marsh thistle) as threatened or endangered with critical habitat; notice of 90-day petition finding and initiation of a status review. Federal Register 74(174):46542-46547.
- USDI, Fish and Wildlife Service. 2010. Endangered and threatened wildlife and plants; 12-month finding on a petition to list *Cirsium wrightii* (Wright's marsh thistle) as endangered or threatened; notice of 12-month petition finding. Federal Register 75(213):67925-67944.
- USDI, Fish and Wildlife Service. 2011. Endangered and threatened wildlife and plants; review of native species that are candidates for listing as endangered or threatened; annual notice of findings on resubmitted petitions; annual description of progress on listing actions; notice of review. Federal Register 76(207):66436.
- USDI, Fish and Wildlife Service. 2012. Endangered and threatened wildlife and plants; review of native species that are candidates for listing as endangered or threatened; annual notice of findings on resubmitted petitions; annual description of progress on listing actions; notice of review. Federal Register 77(225):69994-70060.
- USDI, Fish and Wildlife Service. 2013. Endangered and threatened wildlife and plants; review of native species that are candidates for listing as endangered or threatened; annual notice of findings on resubmitted petitions; annual description of progress on listing actions; notice of review. Federal Register 78(226):70104-70162.
- USDI, Fish and Wildlife Service. 2014. Endangered and threatened wildlife and plants; review of native species that are candidates for listing as endangered or threatened; annual notice of findings on resubmitted petitions; annual description of progress on listing actions; notice of review. Federal Register 79(234):72450-72497.
- USDI, Fish and Wildlife Service. 2015. Endangered and threatened wildlife and plants; review of native species that are candidates for listing as endangered or threatened; annual notice of findings on resubmitted petitions; annual description of progress on listing actions; notice. Federal Register 80(247):80584-80614.
- USDI, Fish and Wildlife Service. 2016. Endangered and threatened wildlife and plants; review of native species that are candidates for listing as endangered or threatened; annual notice of findings on resubmitted petitions; annual description of progress on listing actions; notification of review. Federal Register 81(232):87246-87272.
- USDI, Fish and Wildlife Service. 2017. Species status assessment report for *Cirsium wrightii* (Wright's Marsh Thistle), Version 1.0. October 2017. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Albuquerque, New Mexico. 109 pages.

- USDI, Fish and Wildlife Service. 2019. Endangered and threatened wildlife and plants; review of domestic and foreign species that are candidates for listing as endangered or threatened; annual notification of findings on resubmitted petitions; annual description of progress on listing actions; notice of review. Federal Register 84(197):54732-54757.
- USDI, Fish and Wildlife Service. 2020. Endangered and threatened wildlife and plants; threatened species status for the Wright's marsh thistle (*Cirsium wrightii*) with a 4(d) rule and designation of critical habitat; proposed rule. Federal Register 85(189):61460-61498.
- USDI, Fish and Wildlife Service. 2023. Endangered and threatened wildlife and plants; determination of threatened status for Wright's marsh thistle with a section 4(d) rule and designation of critical habitat. Federal Register 88(79):25208-25249.
- Warren, P.L. 1995. Pers comm to D. Ide (AGFD) June 5, 1995.
- Wild Earth Guardians. 2008. Petition to list the Wright's marsh thistle (*Cirsium wrightii*) under the U.S. Endangered Species Act. Petition submitted to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Office of Endangered Species. Wild Earth Guardians, Santa Fe, New Mexico. 31 pages.

**MAJOR KNOWLEDGEABLE INDIVIDUALS:**

- Patricia Barlow - University of New Mexico  
Bob Sivinski - New Mexico Forestry and Resources

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:**

Many *Cirsium* species will hybridize freely in areas of contact (Munz and Keck 1970). According to New Mexico Rare Plant Technical Council (1999), "The type location for this species is, "Around springs near San Bernardino, on the borders of New Mexico and Sonora, Oct." This appears to be a location in Cochise County, Arizona, but this taxon has not been relocated in that county. Known populations are widely disjunct."

<b>Revised:</b>	1995-05-15 (PLW)
	1995-06-05 (DBI)
	1995-06-12 (PLW)
	2001-12-10 (SMS)
	2010-11-16 (SMS)
	2023-04-25 (MSB)

To the user of this abstract: you may use the entire abstract or any part of it. We do request, however, that if you make use of this abstract in plans, reports, publications, etc. that you credit the Arizona Game and Fish Department. Please use the following citation:

Arizona Game and Fish Department. 20XX (= **year of last revision as indicated at end of abstract**). X...X (= **taxon of animal or plant**). Unpublished abstract compiled and edited by the Heritage Data Management System, Arizona Game and Fish Department, Phoenix, AZ. X pp