

Snow Mountain Buckwheat

(*Eriogonum nervulosum*)

Legal Status

Federal: None

State: None



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Global and State Conservation Status: G2S2.2: Global rank, G2 = Imperiled: At high risk of extinction due to very restricted range, very few populations (often 20 or fewer), steep declines, or other factors; State Rank, S2 = Same as global rank, but only for the range of the taxa in California; State ranks in California often also contain a threat designation attached to the S-rank., S2.2 = threatened.

CNPS List: 1B.2; 1B: Rare, threatened, or endangered in California and elsewhere. 0.2: Fairly endangered in California.

Recovery Plan: None.

Species Description and Life History

Snow Mountain buckwheat (*Eriogonum nervulosum*) is a spreading, 5 to 15 cm perennial herb in the buckwheat family (Polygonaceae) (Hickman 1993; FNA 2007). It is distinguished by its glabrous pale yellow to reddish perianth with stalk-like bases, woolly leaves, subtending bracts, and less than 10 cm inflorescence axis (Hickman 1993). Snow Mountain buckwheat grows from a spreading underground stem system as a rosette with 4 to 10 mm rounded leaves, blooms from June to September with flowers arranged in an umbel-like inflorescence, and produces light brown seeds (CNPS 2001, Hickman 1993; FNA 2007).

Habitat Requirements and Ecology

Snow Mountain buckwheat is found on dry serpentine soils, on rock outcrops, and in barren areas within chaparral habitat (CNPS 2001; CDFG 2007). There are no associate species listed for the Yolo County Snow Mountain buckwheat populations (CDFG 2007). Some associate species listed for populations in nearby counties include Cleveland's ragwort (*Senecio clelandii*), Morrison's jewelflower (*Streptanthus morrisonii*), Pringle's bird's beak (*Cordylanthus pringlei*), Brewer's jewelflower (*Streptanthus breweri*), Sargent's cypress (*Cupressus sargentii*), leather oak (*Quercus durata*), and foothill pine (*Pinus sabiniana*) (CDFG 2007).

Species Distribution and Population Trends

Distribution

Snow Mountain buckwheat is endemic to California and its distribution, as defined by Calflora 2007, is based on 32 observations. There are two identified populations in Yolo County, which occur in the Little Blue Ridge (CDFG 2007). The range of Snow Mountain buckwheat extends from Glenn and Lake Counties in the north, to Colusa and Yolo counties in the east, and Napa and Sonoma counties in the south and west (Calflora 2007).

Population Trends

Population trends of Snow Mountain buckwheat have not been well documented and it is unclear whether the species is declining. According to the CNPS (2001), occurrences of Snow Mountain buckwheat in California are highly limited and the species is at risk throughout its range.

Threats to the Species and Other Conservation Issues

The primary threat to Snow Mountain buckwheat is the loss of serpentine habitat within the range of the species. Some specific losses could potentially be due to energy development, mining, and off-road vehicle traffic (CNPS 2001).

Occurrences of Snow Mountain buckwheat exist as isolated populations growing in relatively small patches within landscapes where unstable rocky slopes, soil erosion, and wild fires are important disturbance agents. Given these observations as starting points, research should address the role of disturbance regimes, identify dispersal vectors, and quantify the role of dispersal in maintaining the isolated populations. Recruitment of new individuals versus the fragmentation of clones, the longevity of adult plants, plant breeding system, and pollinator requirements should also be considered. Snow Mountain buckwheat shares many ecological characteristics with several other species of buckwheat that are known as rock garden plants and information regarding those species might prove to be relevant. Also, while Snow Mountain buckwheat has not been studied in the wild, it is a well known rock garden plant and horticultural sources of information regarding its biology and ecology may exist among rock garden enthusiasts.

Contributors to this species account:

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