

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

**Plant Abstract**

**Element Code:** PDAST2E370

**Data Sensitivity:** No

**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. 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, accessed 2010;  
NatureServe, 2010).

**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 (Sivinski, 1996). 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 (Barlow-Irick 1999).

**ILLUSTRATIONS:**

Color photo (Barlow-Irick, Compiled 1999)

Color photo by Robert Sivinski 2004 (CalPhotos, in [www.NatureServe.org](http://www.NatureServe.org))

Color photos by Robert Sivinski 2004, 2010 (in CalPhotos)

**TOTAL RANGE:** Currently occurs in New Mexico; however, it has been extirpated from all previously known locations in Arizona (Sivinski 1996, 2006a, 2009a; Worthington 2002a; in USFWS 75 FR 2010), and the current status of the species in Mexico is uncertain. Numerous surveys of potential habitat have been conducted over the years with few new localities documented (e.g. Poole 1992, 2010; Sivinski 1994, 1996, 2005, 2009a; Worthington 2002a; in USFWS 75 FR 2010). Those populations of *C. wrightii* that were thought to have occurred in Texas, were misidentified and likely were ever present in Texas (Poole 1992, 2010; Sivinski 1996; in USFWS 75 FR 2010).

**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:** 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:** C (USDI, FWS 2010)

[C USDI, FWS 2011]

**STATE STATUS:**

None

**OTHER STATUS:**

None

**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:**

- Barlow-Irick, P. Compiled 1999. *Cirsium wrightii* (Wright's marsh thistle).  
<http://nmrareplants.unm.edu/reports/cirwri.htm>. Accessed 2001.
- Kearney, T.H. and R.H. Peebles. 1960. Arizona flora (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 Explorer: An online encyclopedia of life [web application]. 2001. Version 1.6. Arlington, Virginia, USA: NatureServe. Available: <http://www.natureserve.org/explorer>. (Accessed: December 10, 2001).
- NatureServe. 2010. NatureServe Explorer: An online encyclopedia of life [web application]. Version 7.1. NatureServe, Arlington, Virginia. Available <http://www.natureserve.org/explorer>. (Accessed: November 17, 2010).
- 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; Proposed Rule. 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.
- Warren, P.L. 1995. Pers comm to D. Ide (AGFD) June 5, 1995.

### **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 Barlow-Irick (Compiled 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."

**Revised:** 1995-05-15 (PLW)  
1995-06-05 (DBI)  
1995-06-12 (PLW)  
2001-12-10 (SMS)  
2010-11-16 (SMS)

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