

Cushion Fleabane (*Erigeron poliospermus* var. *poliospermus*)

Asteraceae (Sunflower Family)

Status: Blue / Not Assessed

Best Survey Time: May to Jun

General Habitat: Upland

RANGE

- Found in North America from Oregon, Washington and Idaho (USA), reaching the northern extent of its range in southern British Columbia
- In B.C., known from numerous sites west of Osoyoos and Oliver

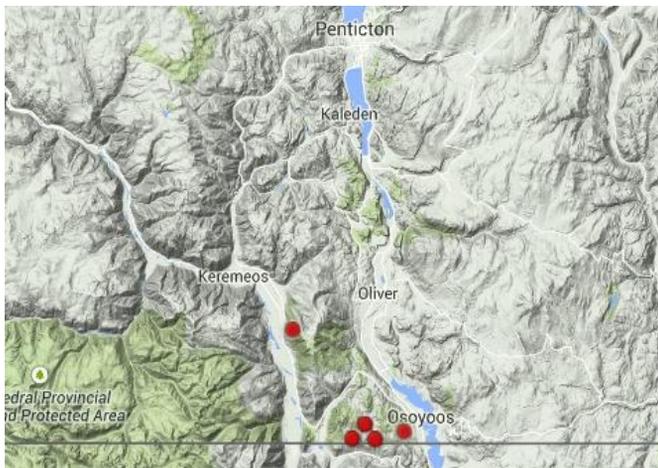


Figure 1 B.C. distribution of *Erigeron poliospermus* var. *poliospermus* (modified from BC CDC 2014)

HABITAT

- Tops of rocky knolls and outcrops in sagebrush steppe in the Interior Douglas fir, Ponderosa Pine and Bunchgrass Biogeoclimatic Zones
- Associates include compact selaginella (*Selaginella densa*), bitterroot (*Lewisia rediviva*), bluebunch wheatgrass (*Pseudoroegneria spicata*), brittle prickly-pear cactus (*Opuntia fragilis*), shaggy fleabane (*Erigeron pumilus*), prairie sagewort (*Artemisia frigida*) and sagebrush (*A. tridentata*)



Figure 2 Rocky bunchgrass habitat west of Osoyoos, B.C.



Figure 3 Close-up of habitat at top of rocky knoll with abundant exposed rock, *Selaginella densa* and *Artemisia frigida*

LIFE HISTORY

- Tufted perennial flowering in May and early June, usually when bitterroot is flowering
- The achenes mature in early to mid-summer, and are plumed, perhaps aiding with dispersal
- Plants die back in the fall and overwinter below ground as persistent caudices (short, persistent stems below the surface)

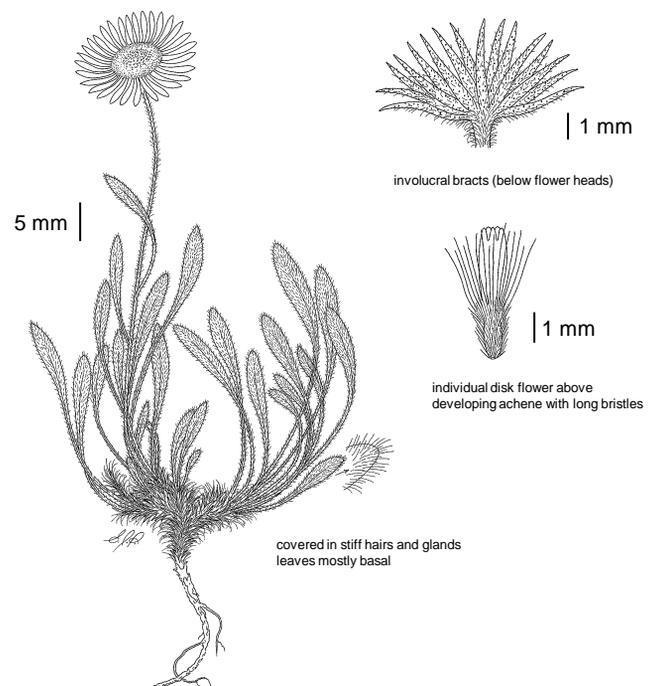


Figure 4 Illustration of *Erigeron poliospermus* var. *poliospermus* by Elizabeth Stephen (Douglas et al. 1998)

Erigeron poliospermus var. *poliospermus* (continued)

DESCRIPTION

General

- Taprooted perennial herb with a branching caudex (short, persistent stem below the surface)
- Erect or curved stems, 10 to 30 cm tall, covered with stiff hairs and glands

Leaves

- Mostly basal, narrowly oblanceolate, covered in hairs and glands, 2 to 8 cm long, and <1 cm wide
- Stem leaves few, mostly linear, reduced in size upwards

Flowers

- Heads with ray and disk flowers, involucre bracts 5 to 9 mm tall, stiff hairy and glandular
- Ray flowers 20 to 45 in number, white to purple, 5 to 14 mm long, 1.3 to 3.6 mm wide

Fruits

- 2-nerved achenes, covered in dense, appressed hairs
- Pappus with an inner series of 20 to 30 firm bristles and an outer series of short scales



Figure 5 Typical plant showing mostly basal, hairy leaves and wide purple ray flowers on erect heads

IDENTIFICATION TIPS

- Often occurs in the same habitat as shaggy fleabane (*Erigeron pumilus*), which has more abundant stem leaves and narrower (0.7 to 1.5 mm), more numerous (50 to 100) white ray flowers
- Tufted fleabane (*Erigeron caespitosus*) looks similar but has stem leaves that are distinctly broader nearer the base than the tips, shorter hairs throughout, and often branching stems; it is a calciphile, preferring high-pH soils, while cushion fleabane occurs on soils derived from acidic rock

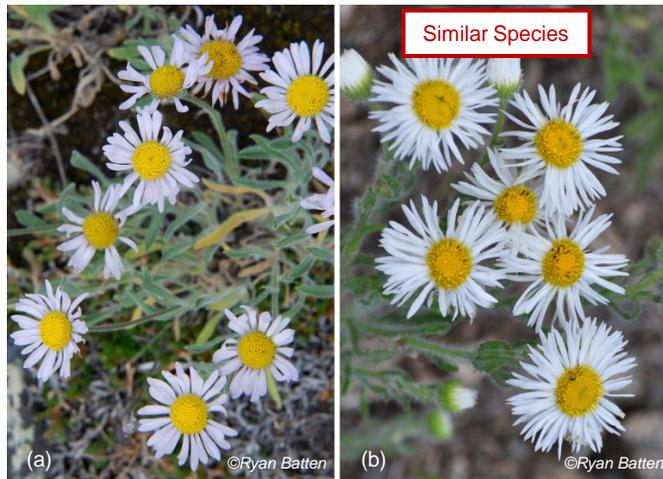


Figure 6 Comparison of (a) *Erigeron poliospermus* and (b) *Erigeron pumilus* flower heads

GENERAL THREATS AND GUIDANCE

- **Avoid development in areas with known occurrences of *Erigeron poliospermus* var. *poliospermus* through project relocation or redesign**
- Protect upland habitats from disturbance and development, including excessive grazing pressure from cattle
- Follow provincial methods for when and how to conduct plant species at risk surveys
- Follow provincial policy and guidance on how to avoid, minimize, restore and offset impacts to plant species at risk and their habitats
- Report any sightings to the B.C. Conservation Data Centre (cdccdata@gov.bc.ca) and FLNR Ecosystems Section (josie.symonds@gov.bc.ca)

REFERENCES

- B.C. Conservation Data Centre. 2014. <http://a100.gov.bc.ca/pub/eswp/>
- COSEWIC. 2008. http://www.publications.gc.ca/collections/collection_2009/ec/CW69-14-568-2009E.pdf
- Douglas et al. (editors). 1998. *Illustrated Flora of British Columbia*. Vol. 1. B.C. Min. Environ., Lands and Parks, and Min. For., Victoria, B.C.
- Klinkenberg, Brian (editor). 2014 E-Flora BC <http://linnet.geog.ubc.ca/Atlas/Atlas.aspx?sciname=Erigeron%20poliospermus>

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Erigeron poliospermus var. *poliospermus* Plant Species at Risk Fact Sheet developed by Josie Symonds, based on content produced under contract by Enlivened Consulting Ltd.