

## Threats

Remaining populations of Nelson's checkermallow are at risk from:

- habitat loss
- invasion by non-native weeds
- tree and shrub encroachment
- elimination of natural disturbance



*Encroachment of non-native shrubs into upland prairie habitat.*

## Habitat Conservation Plan

In spring of 2006, Benton County received a grant from the US Fish and Wildlife Service to develop a Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP). This project will allow the County to:

- increase conservation and restoration opportunities on County and other lands
- provide long-term protection of sensitive species and habitats
- develop a more economical and ecological approach to species conservation and mitigation

The HCP will cover rare and endangered prairie species including Nelson's checkermallow and will describe activities that are likely to harm these species, the steps that will be taken to avoid, minimize and mitigate for such impacts, along with monitoring and adaptive management strategies. The public is encouraged to participate in the planning process which should be completed in 2009.

## What to do if you find this species

For more information or to report Nelson's checkermallow sightings, contact one of the following:

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
Oregon Fish and Wildlife Office  
(503) 231-6179

or

Institute for Applied Ecology  
563 SW Jefferson Ave.  
Corvallis, Oregon 97333  
(541) 753-3099

For information about the Benton County Prairie Species Habitat Conservation Plan please visit:

[www.co.benton.or.us/parks/hcp](http://www.co.benton.or.us/parks/hcp)

Cover photo of Nelson's checkermallow and all other photos by Tom Kaye unless noted otherwise.



Benton County:

**At Your Service**  
Every Day

*This brochure was developed by Institute for Applied Ecology for Benton County.*

# Nelson's checkermallow

*(Sidalcea nelsoniana)*



## Status

Nelson's checkermallow was listed as threatened under the federal Endangered Species Act in 1993. The species is also listed as threatened by the state of Oregon. A recovery plan for the species was finalized in 1998.

## Description

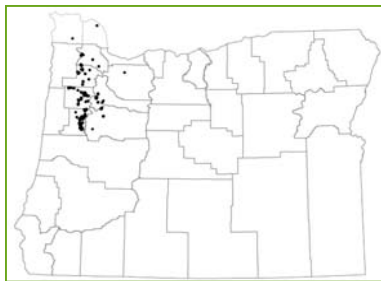
Nelson's checkermallow is a perennial plant in the mallow family (Malvaceae). Pinkish-purplish flowers clustered at the end of 1-2.5 ft tall stems appear from mid-June to mid-July. Nelson's checkermallow reproduces both by seeds that typically mature in August, and also by vegetative rhizomes.



*Sidalcea nelsoniana*.

## Habitat and Range

This species typically occurs in wet prairies of the Willamette Valley and Coast Range. It can also be found along roadsides, in wetlands, and along streams through meadows.



Distribution of Nelson's checkermallow.

## Willamette Valley Prairies

A prairie is an open grassland that has few, if any, trees or shrubs. Prairies in the Willamette Valley typically occur at fairly low elevations in the valley bottom or surrounding foothills. The open structure of prairies will persist only if a regular disturbance prevents the natural encroachment of trees and shrubs.

Natural disturbances such as wildfire can maintain prairies, and human caused disturbances such as prescribed fire or mowing can have similar effects. If natural disturbance is suppressed, and anthropogenic disturbance is not actively used, prairies will become dominated by woody vegetation.



*Willamette Valley wet prairie habitat.*

A native weevil species specific to Pacific Northwest *sidalceas* feeds on checkermallow seeds. This weevil in turn serves as host to a species of parasitic wasp, both of which may be as rare or more rare than Nelson's checkermallow. The showy flowers of Nelson's checkermallow also attract a diverse array of insect visitors although the most common pollinators of these plants are bumblebees. At least one native bee is a specialist on Willamette Valley *sidalceas*. Thus, the fates of many native Willamette Valley prairie species are tied to the status of this plant.

## Look-alikes

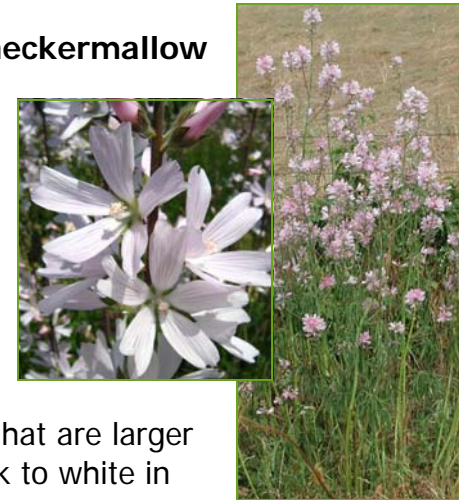
### Dwarf checkerbloom (*Sidalcea virgata*)

Much shorter than other species in the region and also blooms earlier with deep pink to rose-colored flowers that are larger and only loosely clustered compared to Nelson's checkermallow. Dwarf checkerbloom is also found in drier, more upland sites.



### Meadow checkermallow (*Sidalcea campestris*)

Found in habitat similar to that of Nelson's checkermallow but is taller and has flowers that are larger and pale pink to white in color.



### Cusick's sidalcea (*Sidalcea cusickii*)

Appears similar to Nelson's checkermallow but is only found as far north as the city of Eugene, Oregon.

