

Hoary Willow

Salix candida

STATUS

Not Listed



Endangered

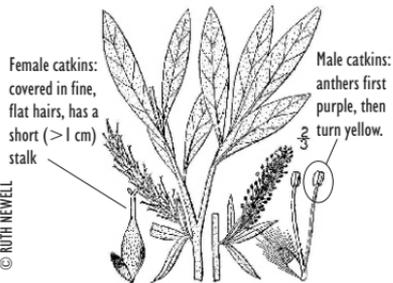


105



Bright white hairy undersides

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Female catkins:
covered in fine,
flat hairs, has a
short (> 1 cm)
stalk

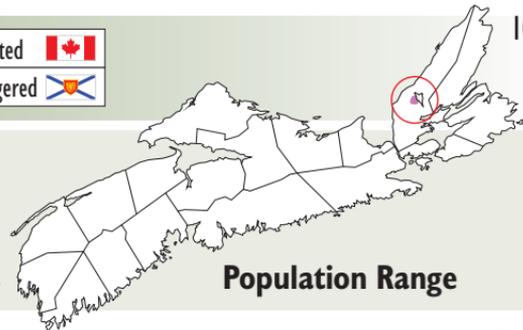
Male catkins:
anthers first
purple, then
turn yellow.

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Species Description

Hoary Willow is a low shrub ranging from 0.3 to 2.5 m tall. It has narrow leaves (5-10 cm long and 0.5-2 cm wide) with smooth edges that are often curled under. The upper leaf colour is generally a dull grey-green. The undersides of the leaves and new twig growth are covered with white woolly hairs, with the hairs on the twigs crinkled. Willows are dioecious, meaning individual plants exclusively bear male or female flowers (in elongate clusters called catkins). The flowers emerge with the leaves in the spring.

1500-2000 plants occur along the Black River in Inverness County, Cape Breton. One other unconfirmed record in NS.



Population Range

Habitat

In Nova Scotia, the Hoary Willow is found in rich, peaty, calcareous fens and is currently known only from the floodplain near the Black River. The fen habitat it occupies is nutrient-rich and supports a high diversity of other rare shrubs, trees, grasses, and herbaceous species. Outside of Nova Scotia, it is also found in other wetland types including floodplains, and meadows, but is largely restricted to calcareous areas.



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Hoary Willow occurs in nutrient-rich wetlands. It flowers in April and May.

Interesting Points

- Hoary Willow leaves are reminiscent of sage and due to this it is also known as Sage Willow or Sage-leaved Willow.
- Seeds produced from Hoary Willow flowers have long hairs that help facilitate dispersal by wind.
- Rich, open, peaty habitat, such as the fens near the Black River are fairly uncommon in Nova Scotia, and are home to a thriving suite of rare, unusual, and provincially unique plant communities.



Female flowers (catkins)

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Similar Species

When not in flower, willow species can be difficult to distinguish from one another. Hoary Willow is relatively distinctive in having relatively long, narrow, untoothed leaves with blunt tips, densely bright white-hairy undersides, and leaves that are often curled under.

Skin Willow (*Salix pellita*, left) and **the hybrid willow**

(*Salix x sericans*, right) :

Both uncommon in NS and occur mostly near river shores. Flowers and fruit differ from Hoary Willow. Their leaves have elongated, pointy (not blunt) tips.



Beaked Willow

(*Salix bebbiana*, left) and

Prairie Willow

(*Salix humilis*, right):

Both common but have shorter leaves widest near the tip with hairy undersides that are not a bright white-hairy.



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Threats to Survival

- Nearby activities that affect wetland hydrology (forest harvesting, mining, oil drilling, road construction, dam construction, or peat harvesting).
- Off-highway vehicle use can damage or destroy seedlings and mature plants.
- Heavy browsing by deer and moose can result in less flowering.
- Fire suppression could result in the long-term loss of open wetland habitats.

How You Can Help

Keep an eye out for this species in fens in areas having gypsum or limestone bedrock. If observed, take a photo, note the location, and report your sighting to the Atlantic Canada Conservation Data Centre (AC CDC). Drive off-highway vehicles on designated trails only. Driving vehicles in sensitive ecosystems is prohibited by the NS Off-highway Vehicles Act and violations can be reported to 1-800-565-2224.



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Hairy twigs and leaves



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Contacts, Information & Sighting Reports

Contact: NS DNR (902) 679-6091

Info: www.novascotia.ca/natr/wildlife/

Sighting Reports: AC CDC (506) 364-2658 or www.speciesatrisk.ca/sightings