

USDA Forest Service Botany in the News

Sundew New to Colorado Found on the San Juan NF

Who (partners): Alison Brady and Dan Williams, San Juan NF
Peggy Lyon and Denise Culver, CO Natural Heritage Program

What (species): *Drosera anglica* English Sundew (circumpolar in the northern hemisphere).

When: July 7, 2006

Where: Region 2, Colorado

How: While surveying fens on the Columbine District, Alison Brady discovered a population of sundews. Globally, sundews are one of the largest genera of carnivorous plants with over 170 species; but only 12 are native to the United States. **This discovery adds a new species to the flora of Colorado.** Until now *Drosera rotundifolia* (roundleaf sundew) has been the only *Drosera* species observed in the state.

Why: No *Drosera* species are protected under the Endangered Species Act, but all are listed as threatened or endangered in some states. Threats include habitat loss to development, peat mining and collection. Sundews are favorite ornamental plants because of their carnivorous nature and their beautiful glistening traps. Sundews are used in 200 – 300 registered medications, usually to treat asthma, coughs, lung infections, and stomach ulcers. These carnivorous plants attract, catch and digest insects via highly sensitive glandular hairs on their leaves, which move in response to the lightest touch by their prey. Charles Darwin observed that contact from the legs of a gnat with a single hair is all it takes for an insect to become ensnared. Feeding on insects supplements the poor mineral nutrition of the soils in which sundews grow. The name, sundew, refers to the shiny drops which give the appearance of morning dew.

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English sundew (*Drosera anglica*) discovery on the San Juan National Forest.

Fen habitat supporting this new addition to the Colorado flora.