

# Endangered Species Act 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Success Stories Ute Ladies'-Tresses Orchid



In 2011, near Carbondale, Colorado, the White River National Forest proposed to convey a small parcel of land along a major river. The parcel was known to support forest service sensitive plant species, including Yellow Lady's Slipper orchid (Fig. 1) and the American Cranberry Bush, which are disjunct in western Colorado and are the only known sites on the forest, as well as several other plants that are rare in Colorado.

Just before the conveyance was approved, Forest Service botanists realized that a very small portion of the parcel had been over-looked in past survey efforts to document rare plants. A "last-minute" survey was conducted, and results were astonishing. The Threatened Ute Ladies'-Tresses orchid (Fig. 2) was discovered. This surprise occurrence is one of only two sites in the Region. Due to these discoveries, the property was re-evaluated in light of its contribution to biological diversity. It was determined that at this time the parcel be retained by the Forest Service, believing this was in the best interest of the American people and allows for securing the long-term viability of both orchid species and the other rare plants.



Figure 2. Ute Ladies'-Tresses Orchid, a Threatened plant that was discovered shortly before the population was to lose federal ownership by a planned land conveyance. This discovery allowed for the Forest Service to retain and secure the populations' long-term viability.



Figure 1. Yellow lady's slipper, a Forest Service sensitive orchid benefitting by retaining the land parcel due to presence of the Threatened orchid Ute Ladies'-tresses.



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