

AVON PARK RABBIT-BELLS

Crotalaria avonensis K.R. DeLaney & Wunderlin

Synonyms: none

Family: Fabaceae (pea)

FNAI Ranks: G1/S1

Legal Status: US-Endangered; FL-Endangered



Gil Nelson

Field Description: Perennial **herb** with hairy **stems** to 18 cm long, either bushy or hugging the ground. **Leaves** simple, entire, alternate; oval, oblong, to nearly round; somewhat succulent, very hairy, with no stipules. **Flowers** are typical pea flowers with an upright banner petal, 2 wings, and a keel petal; yellow with a few purple lines on the upright petal, in clusters at ends of stems. **Fruit** a pod to 2.5 cm long, inflated, tan, grey, or maroon.

Similar Species: Round-leaved harebell (*Crotalaria rotundifolia*), a common species of sandhills, flatwoods, and disturbed areas, is usually sprawling rather than erect; it flowers year-round and has black pods; it usually has stipules on the upper leaves.

Related Rare Species: Many members of the pea family are rare in FL. See in this guide: meadow jointvetch (*Aeschynomene pratensis*), crenulate lead-plant (*Amorpha herbacea* var. *crenulata*), few-flower caesalpinia (*Caesalpinia pauciflora*), sand butterfly pea (*Centrosema arenicola*), Big Pine partridge pea (*Chamaecrista lineata* var. *keyensis*), Florida prairie clover (*Dalea carthagenensis* var. *floridana*), and Ocala vetch (*Vicia ocalensis*).

Avon Park rabbit-bells

Crotalaria avonensis

Habitat: Bare patches of white sand in Lake Wales Ridge scrub; occasionally in disturbed areas or in partial shade.

Best Survey Season: Spring-summer; March - June; fruits and leaves (lacking stipules) are distinctive year-round.

Range-wide Distribution: Endemic to Polk and Highlands counties, FL.

Conservation Status: Only 3 populations of Avon Park rabbit-bells are known; 2 of these occur on conservation lands.

Protection and Management: Use prescribed fire to create a mosaic of successional scrub habitats; control exotic plant species; prevent soil disturbance, trash dumping, ORV use, and rock or shell fill along roadsides near known populations. Maintain plantings in experimental gardens. Acquire private lands that support this species. Monitor animal predation.

References: Coile 2000, DeLaney and Wunderlin 1989, Isely 1990, USFWS 1998, Wunderlin and Hansen 2000a.

