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ERAGROSTIS SUPERBA (POACEAE) NEW TO THE FLORA OF LOUISIANA

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ABSTRACT

Eragrostis superba is reported as new to Louisiana. It occurs abundantly in a power line right-of-way within Walter B. Jacobs Memorial Nature Park northeast of Shreveport.

During a recent survey of plant diversity in Walter B. Jacobs Memorial Nature Park, I found what appeared to be an unusual grass growing abundantly along a power line right-of-way. I identified it as *Eragrostis superba* Peyr. and sent specimens to Chris Reid and Charles Allen, who confirmed the identification as a species previously unreported for the Louisiana flora.

Voucher. Louisiana. Caddo Par.: Walter B. Jacobs Memorial Nature Park, 3 mi W of Blanchard, just northeast of Shreveport, power line right-of-way, soils of the acidic Guyton series, ca. 500 culms in an area of 1.5 acres, 21 Oct 2019, *Kelley 157* (LSUS).

The plants were found only along the disturbed roadbed on the north side of the right-of-way opening. This area is dominated by native herbaceous plants such as *Andropogon*, *Liatris*, *Tridens*, and *Rudbeckia* species. The roadbed has been traveled frequently and graded after updates to the power line in 2018 — the open area is managed by mowing. The area was reseeded from a Texas native seed mix, which may have contained *Eragrostis superba* seeds, or the seeds may have been brought in by tire treads.

Eragrostis superba is a perennial, warm-season bunch-grass. It is native to Africa and naturalized in North America after being introduced to rangelands for use in revegetation and drought tolerance (Diggs et al. 2006). Rapid growth, high seed production, and high seedling vigor give the species the potential for aggressive colonization (USDA, NRCS 2014).

Eragrostis superba is known to occur in at least 31 counties in Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, and Oklahoma (Kartesz 2014; USDA, NRCS 2014). The range as reported by BONAP is significantly smaller than that of the iNaturalist citizen-science app for the state of Texas. iNaturalist also shows a sharp increase in sightings since 2016. Collection data suggest that the species escaped cultivation in this region as early as 1954 (SERNEC Data Portal 2019).

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Chris Reid (LSU, School of Renewable Natural Resources) and Charles Allen (Allen Acres) confirmed the identification and reviewed the manuscript. Daniel Mills provided information about the power line maintenance and will monitor the species on-site.

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