

Suaeda J. E. Gmelin SEA-BLITE, SEEPWEED

Suaeda esteroa Ferren & S. A. Whitmore, ESTUARY SEA-BLITE. Subshrub to shrub, evergreen, halophytic, with major branches decumbent to ascending, < 60 cm tall; shoots with ascending, overlapping, fleshy leaves, glabrous, \pm glaucous. **Stems:** cylindric, young stems 2–6 mm diameter, light yellowish green, internodes 1–6 mm long. **Leaves:** helically alternate, simple, sessile, without stipules; blade narrowly lanceolate to linear-lanceolate arching upward, 20–52 \times 3.3–4.5 mm, 1.5–2.2 mm thick, grayish yellow-green, entire, narrowly acute at tip, obscurely 1-veined, glaucous, the epidermal cells convex beneath surface wax, upper surface flat to slightly concave, lower surface convex. **Inflorescence:** leafy, spikelike arrays of sessile axillary cymes (glomes), glome headlike and (3–)4–7-flowered, with sessile, bisexual (unisexual) flowers, bracteate, glabrous; bract subtending cyme leaflike, sessile; bractlet subtending flower obscure, deltate and flat to ovate and cupped, < 0.8 mm long, white-membranous. **Flower:** bisexual (occasionally unisexual), slightly bilateral, 1.5–3 mm across, nonshowy; receptacle flat and fleshy; **calyx** (4–)5(–6)-lobed, glabrous; tube short; lobes fleshy-ovate, at anthesis 0.5–0.7 \times 0.7–1 mm increasing to 0.7–1.3+ \times 1–1.6+ mm in fruit, concave or hooded and cupping anthers, very convex on outer face, green and narrowly membranous on margins, acute to rounded and membranous at tip, sometimes reddish at tip, aging purplish red; **petals** absent; **stamens** 5, free, opposite calyx lobes; filaments compressed front-to-back, 0.8–1.2 mm long, greenish yellow to light yellow; anthers dorsifixed, dithecal, heart-shaped to oblong, 0.7–1 \times 0.6–1 mm, light yellow, longitudinally dehiscent; pollen light yellow; **pistil** 1; ovary superior, subspheroid (oblate to trulloid), ca. 0.8 \times 0.6 mm, glabrous, grading into style, 1-chambered with 1 ovule; style conic, ca. 0.3 mm long, 2–3-branched, the branches spreading or ascending, ca. 0.5 mm long, at anthesis reddish, minutely papillate. **Fruit:** utricle, indehiscent, 1-seeded, conforming to shape of seed but free and easily removed, translucent. **Seed:** vertical, irregularly to roundish biconvex, 1.2–1.5 \times 1–1.3 \times 0.8–1 mm, shiny reddish brown, smooth. Late June–mid-October.

Native. A fleshy, halophytic perennial first described in 1983 from the Point Mugu salt marsh (type locality) and restricted to Pacific salt marshes in southern California from Goleta Slough in Santa Barbara County to Baja California Sur at the same latitude as La Paz. *Suaeda esteroa* is the common species of *Suaeda* at Point Mugu, occurring with codominant halophytes *Salicornia pacifica*, *Jaumea carnosa*, *Batis maritima*, *Frankenia grandifolia*, and *Distichlis littoralis*. This species of *Suaeda* has glabrous styles. The plant examined appeared to have vertical fruits and seeds, although they are described as being horizontal.

B. A. Prigge & A. C. Gibson