Ranunculus godleyanus

Common Name(s):

Yellow alpine buttercup

Current Threat Status (2012):

At Risk - Recovering

Distribution:

Endemic. South Island from Mt Rolleston and Mt Hunt (Arthurs Pass National Park) south to Mt Sefton near the Hermitage (Mt Cook National Park).

Habitat:

High alpine (1400-2030 m a.s.l.). On shaded to sunny, permanently damp, rock ledges, cliff faces, boulder chokes and falls usually in the immediate vicinity of permanent icefields and glaciers.

Caption: Close up at Twin Falls Creek, Hawdon, Arthurs Pass (January)
Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth

Features*:

Stout, glabrous, perennial, rosette forming herb bearing flowering stems up to 0.6 m tall. Rhizomes stout, white, 10-15 mm diam., shortly branched. Rosette leaves glabrous, fleshy and coriaceous, on thick fleshy petioles 50-150 x 5-15 mm, bases widely sheathing; lamina 60-150 x 40-100 mm, pale green, broadly oblong, apex rounded, base rounded to cuneate, margin coarsely crenate, veins shallowly reticulate. Scape stout, 0.2-0.6 m tall, naked below, bearing from the middle up 2-4 large, sessile or shortly stalked oblong or rounded bracts from the axils of which arise several simple or branched flowering peduncles, each bearing 1-2 secondary bracts subtending the pedicels. Flowers 5-15 per scape, 30-50 mm diam., bright golden yellow; sepals 5, broadly oblong, glabrous; petals 5-6, cuneate obovate, emarginate, gland basally, large, naked, often split 2-3 times into parallel lobes; receptacle oblong. Achenes numerous, pilose with long silky hairs or glabrescent; body ovate, turgid,(2.2-)2.5-3.0 mm long, surface dull, light orange-yellow, orange-brown or grey nut brown; beak (4.0-) 5.0-5.5 mm long, usually straight, rarely hooked or curved.

Flowering:

December - February

Fruiting:

February - May

Threats:

An high altitude endemic, naturally uncommon because of its habitat preferences. However, it is directly threatened by thar and chamois which browse this species wherever they can reach it. Provided thar and chamois numbers are kept down this species thrives (hence the qualifier CD - conservation dependent). For this reason its presence and condition provides an excellent bioindicator of the relative density of thar and chamois.

***Attribution:**

Fact Sheet prepared by P.J. de Lange (12 February 2007). Description based on Fisher (1965).

References and further reading:

Fisher, F.J.F. 1965: The alpine *Ranunculi* of New Zealand. *Bulletin, New Zealand Department of Scientific and Industrial Research 165*: 1-192.

For more information, visit:
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