

Ranunculus godleyanus

COMMON NAMES

yellow alpine buttercup

BIOSTATUS

Native – Endemic taxon

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | At Risk – Declining | Qualifiers: DPT, RR

[Jump to previous conservation statuses](#)

CATEGORY

Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Herbs - Dicotyledons other than Composites

FLOWER COLOURS

Yellow

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

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.

SIMILAR TAXA

Close to *R. insignis* Hook.f. from which it differs by its completely glabrous leaves (those of *R. insignis* either have a dense covering of spreading hairs or the sparse hairs confined to the leaf margin), flattened (up to 20 mm wide) rather than terete (< 5 mm wide) petiole, and achene beaks which are 2-3X, rather than 0.4-1.5X the length of the body

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. South Island from Mt Rolleston and Mt Hunt (Arthur's 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.

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.



Close up at Twin Falls Creek, Hawdon, Arthurs Pass (January). Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth, Licence: CC BY-NC.



Flowering, Mungo River upper valley, West Coast. Photographer: Dave Toole, Date taken: 04/01/2021, Licence: CC BY-NC.

GENUS

Ranunculus

FAMILY

Ranunculaceae

AUTHORITY

Ranunculus godleyanus Hook.f.

SYNONYMS

None

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

FLOWERING

December - February

FRUITING

February - May

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Difficult. Should not be removed from the wild

ETYMOLOGY

ranunculus: From the Latin 'rana' frog, meaning little frog and probably refers to the plants typical marshy habit where frogs abound

NVS CODE

RANGOD

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 48

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2017 | At Risk – Recovering | Qualifiers: CD, RR

2012 | At Risk – Recovering | Qualifiers: CD, RR

2009 | At Risk – Recovering | Qualifiers: CD, RR

2004 | Range Restricted

[Jump to current conservation status](#)

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.

ATTRIBUTION

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

MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/ranunculus-godleyanus/>

PDF DATE

08 June 2026