Ranunculus paucifolius

COMMON NAMES
Castle Hill buttercup

BIOSTATUS
Native – Endemic taxon

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS
2023 | Threatened – Nationally Critical | Qualifiers: CD, OL, RF
Jump to previous conservation statuses



Ranunculus pauciflorus. Photographer: Brian P. Molloy, Licence: CC BY-NC.



Photographer: Melissa Hutchison, Date taken: 04/11/2021, Licence: CC BY-NC.

CATEGORY
Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS
Herbs - Dicotyledons other than Composites

FLOWER COLOURS
Yellow

DETAILED DESCRIPTION
Robust, summer-green, glabrous herb, up to 100 mm high. Rhizome up to 180 mm long, stout, sometimes branched, with thick vertical fibres; stock stout, erect or ascending, up to 40 mm long. Rosette leaves 1–20; lamina 20–70 × 20–60 mm, spreading, broadly reniform or broadly orbicular, grey to grey-green, often purplish, nearly entire or divided into 3–5 primary segments, segments usually shallow divided although occasionally up to 3/4 lamina depth, overlapping, margin finely dentate, base cuneate to subreniform; petiole 20–60 × 1.5–4.5 mm; sheath at base, broad. Scape 10–20 mm long, solitary, stout, naked, 1-flowered; reflexed at maturity. Flowers 20–50 mm diameter. Sepals 5, 8–11 × 4–6 mm, pale yellow, deflexed, ovate-oblong, apex subacute. Petals 5–10, 15–20 × 6–13 mm, golden yellow, broadly obovate, obovate to oblanceolate, apex obtuse to rounded, nectary 1–3 simple pits. Stamens 23–38; filament 3.5–5.0 mm long; anthers 1.8–2.2 mm long. Carpels 17–35. Achenes 3.0–4.2 mm long, brown; beak curved, laterally compressed, tapering toward apex.

SIMILAR TAXA
Most similar to *R. crithmifolius* from which it is distinguished by the leaves having three or occasionally five shallow and usually overlapping lobes that are rarely dissected to the base, the margins are finely and sharply toothed, and the base truncate to cuneate. In contrast, *R. crithmifolius* has leaves that are trifoliolate, each lobe is further divided for about one third of the depth, and the margins are more coarsely and deeply toothed to crenate.

DISTRIBUTION
Endemic. New Zealand: South Island (Canterbury)

HABITAT
Montane. Restricted to limestone colluvium and tallus in a gently sloping basin.

THREATS
A limestone endemic that is naturally restricted to a very small geographical area. Plants are vulnerable to browse damage from rabbits, hares and sheep, weeds are a constant threat, and seedlings are rarely seen.

GENUS
Ranunculus

FAMILY
Ranunculaceae

AUTHORITY
Ranunculus paucifolius Kirk

SYNONYMS
Ranunculus crithmifolius subsp. pauciflorus (Kirk) F.J.F.Fisher; Ranunculus crithmifolius Hook.f. pro parte

ENDEMIC TAXON
Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS
No

ENDEMIC FAMILY
No

FLOWERING
October–December

FRUITING
November–January

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
paucifolius: Few leaves

NVS CODE
RANPAU

CHROMOSOME NUMBER
2n = 48

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES
2017 | Threatened – Nationally Critical | Qualifiers: CD, DP, OL
2012 | Threatened – Nationally Critical | Qualifiers: CD, OL
2009 | Threatened – Nationally Critical | Qualifiers: CD, OL
2004 | Not Threatened
Jump to current conservation status

ATTRIBUTION
Description based on Kirk (1899), Allan (1961), Fisher (1965) and herbarium specimens.
Some of this factsheet information is derived from Flora of New Zealand Online and is used under a Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 New Zealand licence.

NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION
Please cite as: de Lange, P.J. (Year at time of access): Ranunculus paucifolius Fact Sheet (content continuously updated). New Zealand Plant Conservation Network.
https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/ranunculus-paucifolius/ (Date website was queried)

MORE INFORMATION
https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/ranunculus-paucifolius/

PDF DATE
06 June 2026