



GET TO KNOW THE PLATEAU

Cave Primrose

Primula specuicola

Habitat & Ecology

Cave primrose can be seen literally hanging out on the plateau in hanging gardens and seeps at broad elevations ranging between 380-2,350 meters (1,250-7,700 ft). Preferring canyons and tributaries of the Colorado River, amongst alcoves, entradas (entrance ways) of Navajo sandstone formations, and limestone sediment. On the Diné (Navajo) Nation specifically in Chinle Wash and canyons at Navajo National Monument. Glen Canyon National Recreation Area is another known site for this rare plant, as well as in the Grand Canyon river corridor known only to be found near springs in typical preferred habitat between Buck Farm Canyon and Berts Canyon. Bearing kinship to the Primulaceae (Primrose) Family, cave primrose is the only species of this family in all of Arches National Park in southern Utah. Its subtle flowers draw in attention from key pollinators such as bees, moths and butterflies.

Description

Flowering typically between March-May, lends this species to also commonly be known as Easter Flower. Umbels, or a clustering of flowers at the end of a leafless stalk, will range between 5-40 individual flowers. Their color is whitish to pink, tubular in form, 1.5 cm (0.6 in), with 5 stamens and 1 pistil. The corolla tube displays a rim of yellow. With natural allure and beauty, Cave primrose stands erectly from its basal leaf base, 6.1-28.5 cm (2.4-11.2 in) tall. Leaves are spatula shaped, simple and toothed. The fruit matures to a capsule bearing seed.



P. specuicola typical seep habitat./Grant Cactus CC BY-NC

Conservation Status and Threats

Cave primrose is endemic to the Colorado Plateau and recognized as C3 Federal Species of Concern by the US Fish & Wildlife Service, referring to species that are not currently listed as threatened or endangered but are still of conservation concern.

Endemic Species of the Colorado Plateau



P. specuicola/Amy Washuta-NPS

The Navajo Nation Division of Natural Resources and Department of Fish and Wildlife gives cave primrose a G4 status. This indicates there is not enough information to denote a higher rank, yet efforts are continually occurring to determine the need to categorize differently or remove from the list.

Any effects to surrounding groundwater are threats to this plant's existence for consideration with activity. A 60 meter (200 ft) buffer zone to avoid disturbance is recommended.

Of Note

Genus *Primula*, meaning "little firstling" refers to it being one of the earlier flowers to bloom. Species *specuicola*, or "cave dwelling" refers to the specific habitat to which it grows.

Although common names may assume the relation of cave primrose to evening primrose, they are actually from different families - *Primulaceae* and *Onagraceae*.

References

- Elpel, Thomas J. 2018. Botany in a Day. Edition 6.1.
- Huisinga, Kristin, Lori Makarick, and Kate Watters. 2006. River and Desert Plants of the Grand Canyon
- Roth, Daniela. 2008. Species account for *Primula specuicola*. Navajo Natural Heritage Program, Navajo Nation Endangered Species List Version 4.20

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