U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Uinta Basin Hookless Cactus

Sclerocactus wetlandicus

Uinta Basin Hookless Cactus / USFWS

What does the Uinta Basin hookless cactus look like?

The Uinta Basin hookless cactus is a barrel-shaped cactus. The flowers are pink to violet and funnel-shaped. These cacti can grow to 7 inches tall, with exceptional plants reaching 12 inches in height. The stems are ribbed and have whitish gray, 0.24 - 0.8 inch long spines radiating from clusters. The center of each cluster typically has three much longer central spines, sometimes up to 2 inches long.

This species looks similar to Pariette cactus (*Sclerocactus brevispinus*), but is typically larger with longer central spines. However, these two species hybridize where their ranges overlap, and some individuals can have traits of both species.

Drew Crane / USFWS

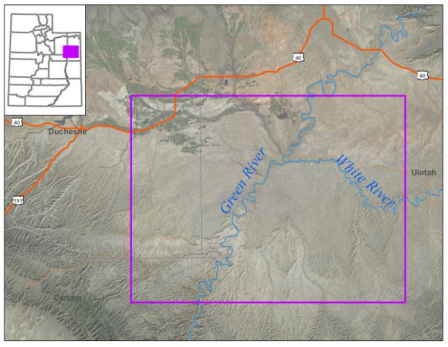
Where does the Uinta Basin hookless cactus occur?

Populations of the endemic Uinta Basin hookless cactus occur primarily in Uintah County, Utah, along the Green River, the White River, and their tributaries. The species also occurs within Duchesne and Carbon Counties, Utah.

This cactus is generally found on coarse soils derived from cobble and gravel river terrace deposits, or rocky surfaces on mesa slopes at 4,400 - 6,200 feet in elevation. Uinta Basin hookless cactus can be found growing with other common desert shrubland plants including shadscale, black sagebrush and galleta grass.

Legal Status under the Endangered Species Act

Uinta Basin hookless cactus was listed as threatened on October 11, 1979 (44 FR 58868) as *Sclerocactus glaucus*. In 2009, we recognized Uinta Basin hookless cactus as a distinct species, *Sclerocactus wetlandicus*, and retained its threatened status (74 FR 47112).



Species Range / USFWS

Why does the Uinta Basin hookless cactus need protection?

When we listed this species, the biggest threats were oil and gas development, recreational off-road vehicle use, and illegal collection. All of these threats remain today, particularly oil and gas development—63 percent of the total range of the species occurs within approved energy field development projects. An additional 10 percent of Uinta Basin hookless cactus potential habitat was disturbed by historical energy field development. New threats include climate change, parasitism by the cactus-borer beetle, and invasive weeds.

Survey flags in species habitat / Nathan Darnall, USFWS

What have we done to recover the Uinta Basin hookless cactus?

We are currently updating and revising a recovery plan for this species. In the interim, we published a recovery outline in April 2010 that lists necessary actions to recover the species. We are working with our Federal, State, and private partners to implement these recovery efforts.

We are working with the BLM, Bureau of Indian Affairs, and Ute Tribe to develop core conservation areas and management guidelines for Uinta Basin hookless cactus.

Since 2006, we have participated in the public-private partnership of the Uinta Basin Rare Plant Forum. Members of this forum work to identify conservation actions for rare plants, including Uinta Basin hookless cactus. As a Forum, we coordinated a volunteer effort in 2010 to survey our largest, most undisturbed Uinta Basin hookless cactus population. Based on this effort, we now estimate the total number of Uinta Basin hookless cacti at about 50,000.

We are working across State lines to fund research on the effects of development on rare cactus species, including Uinta Basin hookless cactus. We are also developing a range-wide, long-term monitoring plan for this species.

What do we need to do to recover the Uinta Basin hookless cactus?

In the recovery outline, we identified the following actions needed for species recovery:

- We recommend completing comprehensive surveys throughout the species' range.
- We need an accurately delineated range map of Uinta Basin hookless cactus in relationship to Pariette cactus.
- We recommend monitoring efforts continue and expand to include a larger and more representative sample of occupied sites.
- We encourage land management agencies establish formal land management designations to protect this species in the long -term.
- We recommend livestock exclosures are installed to protect the species.
- We need to protect Uinta Basin hookless cactus from illegal collection.

Jared Megown helping with survey efforts / Bekee Hotze , USFWS

More Information

To learn more about the Uinta Basin hookless cactus and conservation efforts on behalf of the species, please visit the following sites:

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Endangered Species Program's website:
www.fws.gov/endangered

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Information, Planning and Conservation (IPaC) System:
ecos.fws.gov/ipac

The Mountain-Prairie Regional Office's website:
http://www.fws.gov/mountain-prairie/species/plants/

The Utah Field Office's website:
www.fws.gov/utahfieldoffice

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
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