

ENDANGERED SPECIES

San Rafael Cactus (*Pediocactus despainii*)

P. despainii was listed as an endangered species under the authority of the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended on September 16, 1987 (USFWS 1987). This member of the cactus family (Cactaceae) is a small depressed-hemispheric plant between 3.8 and 6 cm tall. Its spines are pale yellowish in color and relatively short (up to 6 mm long), though they are not obscured by the pale yellow, woolly hairs. The fruit is green in color, drying to reddish brown, smooth in texture, and of obovoid shape. Its seeds are shiny black. The flowers range from yellow to peach in color (Welsh et al. 2003).

This species is endemic to central Utah in Emery County. It prefers open pinyon-juniper and salt desert shrub communities on limestone gravels between 6,000 and 6,700 feet (Welsh et al. 2003). This cactus is found mainly on the tops and sides of hills and benches and on the flats, and favors full or partial sunlight. It blooms from late April to mid-May, and fruit matures in late May. Reproduction is sexual and pollination is achieved by flying insects (Heil 1984).

During much of the year, this species will shrink underground, defending itself against the harsh climatic conditions. It resurfaces in the spring depending on winter or spring moisture. This species is closely related to *P. winkleri* (Clark 2002).

Threats to this plant may include insect damage, trampling, damage from OHVs, and specimen collecting (Heil 1984, USFWS 1987).

P. despainii was found in Wayne County, on the Loa Ranger District of the Fishlake National Forest in 1997. Another separate population was discovered on the Loa Ranger District during the 1999 field season (Clark 2002).