

Hypericum aciferum (Greuter) N. Robson

GUTTIFERAE

Endangered

Status

Endangered. At present it is known only from two small populations in SW Kriti. Approximately 35 individuals were counted in its classical locality, while in a nearby gorge a second population occurs, consisting of about 60 individuals.

Description

Low, procumbent shrub. Leaves 5-12 × 0.6-1.4 mm, narrowly linear-spathulate, coriaceous. Flowers (1-3), pedicellate, heterostylous. Sepals ±3.5 mm long, almost erect, elliptical. Petals c. 9 mm, deciduous. Stamen fascicles 3, alternating with 3 fleshy fascicelodes. Ovary with 2 ovules in each loculus. Seeds 1.5-1.7 mm long, elongate, subcylindrical, slightly carinate, with a fleshy caruncle.

Distribution

Endemic. The two known populations are growing on coastal rocks of the district of Sfakia (SW Kriti).

Habitat and ecology

Hypericum aciferum is a typical chasmophyte, growing on vertical, coastal rocks, at altitudes between 4-50 m. It seems that the species prefers sites with a rather northern exposure, although it grows equally well on other rock faces. The plants appear to be tolerant to frequent spraying by sea water. The species usually grows together with the following taxa: *Allium bourgeanii* subsp. *creticum*, *Centaurea argentea*, *Dianthus fruticosus* subsp. *creticus*, *Origanum dictamnus*, *Oreithogalum creticum* and *Stachellina fruticosa*.

Conservation measures taken

None.

Conservation measures proposed

Seeds of this rare plant should be stored in a seed bank, although the collection of ripe seeds in nature may be difficult. Once established, however, the plants can be vegetatively propagated without much effort. A few plants are already growing in the Municipal Garden of the city of Iraklion, Kriti.

Biology and potential value

The species belongs to section *Triadentis* and its closest relative is *Hypericum euzegeri*, a rare species of S Turkey and N Syria.

References

- Greuter, W. 1965: Beiträge zur Flora der Südligis 1-7. - *Cardolice* 20: 167-218.
Turland, N. 1992: Floristic notes from Crete. - *Bot. J. Linn. Soc.* 108: 343-357.

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