Edraianthus canescens (Campanulaceae), a new species from the Central Balkan peninsula

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Abstract

Edraianthus canescens is described as a new species from the central part of the Balkan Peninsula (eastern Dinaric Alps of western Serbia). It is a calcicolous stenooendemic of the Ovčarsko-Kablarska gorge of the river West Morava. Its population size is estimated to be less than 2000 mature individuals occupying less than 1 km². The new species inhabits south-facing exposed rocky crevices, rarely screes, on calcareous bedrock, at elevations between 300 and 750 m. The closest relatives are taxa distributed in the central Balkans from the Balkan-Apennine E. graminifolius complex.

Key words: endemic species, capsule dehiscence, axicorn, indumentum

Introduction


Recent results of molecular (Stefanović et al. 2008) and multivariate statistical analysis of morphological parameters (Rakić 2010, Rakić et al. 2012) showed that in the central Balkans there are several distinct groups of populations within the E. graminifolius (L.) A. DC. 1839: 448 complex. Some of these groups partially correspond to the taxa described as E. caricinus Schott, Nyman & Kotschy 1854: 6, E. montenegrinus Horák 1900: 163, E. jugoslavicus Lakušić 1974: 49 and E. vesovicii Lakušić 1974: 79, as proposed by Lakušić (1974) in his monograph, whereas some of them appeared very distinct.

Plants that inhabit calcareous cliffs of the Ovčarsko-Kablarska gorge of the river West Morava in western Serbia (eastern Dinaric Alps) show clear morphological differences in comparison to other taxa from the E. graminifolius complex (Figs. 1 & 2). These plants are distinguished by exceptionally dense greyish-green indumentum of leaves, stems, bracts and calyx; raised trichomes directed toward the leaf apex, or orientated in all directions except towards the leaf base; involucral bracts with short apex, and in particular by capsule dehiscence by basal lateral pores. In addition, the results of recent molecular analysis of cpDNA sequences showed that populations from the Ovčarsko-Kablarska gorge are distinct from other investigated populations from the E. graminifolius complex of the central Balkans (Stefanović et al. 2008). Significant morphological differences and relatively distinct position based on molecular phylogenetic evidence from the Edraianthus graminifolius complex indicates that plants from the Ovčarsko-Kablarska gorge merit the rank of a new species.