On the identity of Anchusa leucantha (Boraginaceae) from northern Greece

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Abstract

Anchusa leucantha, previously considered an ophiolithic endemic restricted to a small area in north central Greece, is shown to be a heterotypic synonym of A. officinalis var. ochroleuca. It occurs in southeastern Albania, the southern part of F.Y.R. Macedonia and northern Greece. We treat this taxon as part of the polymorphic A. officinalis, for which A. officinalis subsp. leucantha is proposed as a new combination.

Introduction

In the year 2003 Selvi and Bigazzi described a new and rare species of Anchusa endemic to a small area with ophiolithic rock outcrops in north central Greece. They named it Anchusa leucantha as the flowers were creamy white. It was stated to differ from A. officinalis Linnaeus (1753: 133) in having a more specialized ecology and a less variable morphology, being closest to the taxon known as A. officinalis var. ochroleuca Boissier (1875: 152). Anchusa leucantha Selvi & Bigazzi (2003: 436; Fig. 1) was first collected by P. Hartvig, A. Strid and Kit Tan during a student excursion from the University of Copenhagen to NW Greece in May 1999. The collected material was labelled and distributed as A. officinalis.

Another unusual aspect of A. leucantha, stated to be unique within the genus, is that it is an ecological endemic of ophiolithic rocks. In its locus classicus near Edessa it grows on rocky outcrops with other lithophytic species such as Alyssum, Thymus striatus, Trinia glauca and Euphorbia myrsinites. It was stated to disappear when the parent rock changes to limestone or when the soil becomes nutrient-rich.

Anchusa officinalis subsp. officinalis var. ochroleuca was accepted by Selvi & Bigazzi (2003) as a morphotype of A. officinalis with pale yellow flowers. It occurs in the area between Edessa, Bitola and Prilep in F.Y.R. Macedonia, and from our present work is also known to exist in southeastern Albania. In Greece it was previously known only from two collections, in the prefectures of Kozanis and Florinis in the north central mainland (Fig. 2). The record from Kozanis is the southernmost one. In F.Y.R. Macedonia this plant