

***Gerbera sylvicola* (Asteraceae: Mutisieae), a new forest species from KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa**

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Abstract

A new South African endemic species, *Gerbera sylvicola* is described and illustrated, with data provided on its morphology, ecology and distribution. The species appears to be closely related to *G. kraussii* and whilst it shares felted and prominently veined abaxial leaf surfaces, several ecological, reproductive and vegetative features clearly distinguish it. Its affinities are discussed.

Key words: Asteraceae, *Gerbera*, Mutisieae, South Africa, taxonomy

Introduction

Gerbera Linnaeus (1758: 247), with five sections and ca. 30 herbaceous species, is distributed mostly in South Africa. Three species extend into sub-Saharan Africa (Jeffrey 1967; Hansen 1985a) but the phytogeographic limits are marked by eight Madagascar endemics (Hansen 1985b) and seven species from the Sino-Himalayan region (Hilliard 1977). The placement of a South American Mutisieae species as *Gerbera hintonii* (Bullock 1937: t. 3346) Katinas (1998: 382) is the subject of debate (Katinas 2004; Nesom 2004a, 2004b; Hansen 2006).

Although *Gerbera* has been estimated to comprise about 16 species in South Africa (Hilliard 1977), the most recent comprehensive study, based on classic morphological concepts, accepts only 12 species (13 taxa) (Hansen 1985a). The species here described belongs to *G.* sect. *Lasiopus* (Cassini 1817: 152) Schultz-Bipontinus (1844: 780), represented in South Africa by five species and one subspecies. The taxonomy of *Gerbera* is far from satisfactory, despite its relatively small size, and its significance in international flori- and horticulture. The subject of this report shows affinities to both *G. kraussii* Schultz-Bipontinus (1844: 781) and *G. ambigua* (Cassini 1817: 153) Schultz-Bipontinus (1844: 780). However, it can be distinguished by a suite of floral and vegetative characters and an entirely different ecological niche. It is named *Gerbera sylvicola* in reference to this latter characteristic.

Materials and methods

Herbarium specimens were studied from BOL, K, MO, NBG, NH, NU, PRE, SAM (acronyms according to Thiers 2014). Detailed morphological studies of *G. sylvicola* were undertaken on living material from the type locality in KwaZulu-Natal.

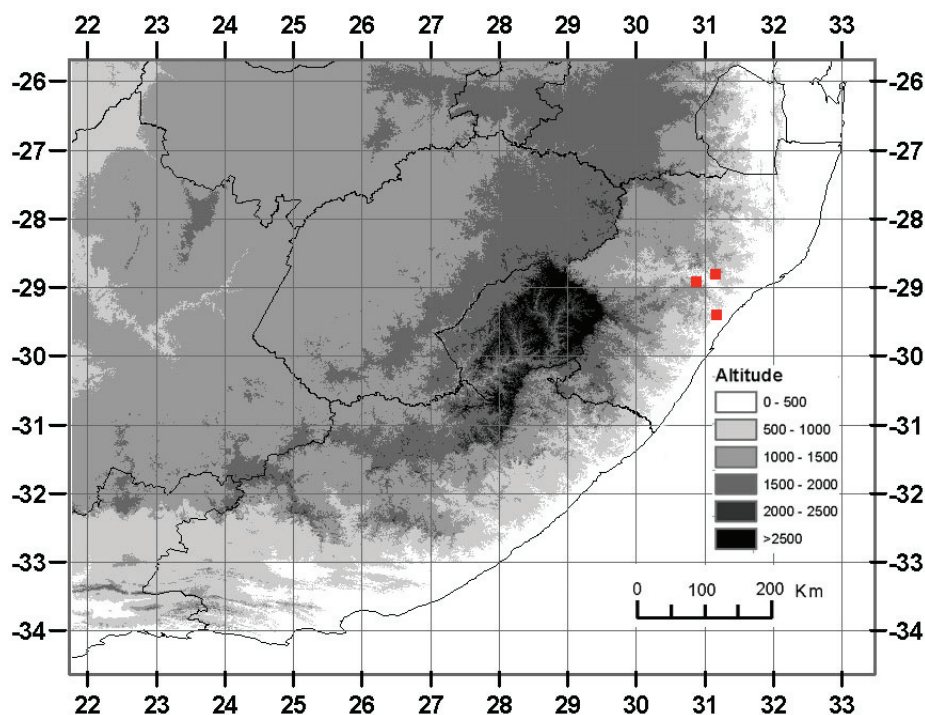


FIGURE 3. Known distribution of *Gerbera sylvicola* in South Africa.

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