

NOTES ON THE FLORA OF MALTA - 2:

AMMANNIA COCCINEA ROTTBOELL

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In June 1978 an unfamiliar Lythraceous plant was found growing at Marsa (east Malta) by one of the authors (MB). The plant was later identified as *Ammannia coccinea* Rottb., a native of the Americas (from U.S.A. to Brazil). It is known in Europe as an adventive weed of rice-fields in Spain and Portugal (WEBB, 1968; GUINEA LOPEZ and CEBALLOS JIMENES, 1974). More recently it was recorded, again in rice-fields, from Piedmont (provinces of Alessandria and Novara), Italy (ABBÀ, 1977).

The Maltese station is in a highly urbanized locality in the Grand Harbour area. There are a number of freshwater springs which give rise to relatively large pools. As is to be expected from this kind of habitat, the flora is rich in adventives. Within the pools, *Ammannia coccinea* formed the dominant element, being replaced by *Aster squamatus* (Sprengel) Hieron. and *Cynodon dactylon* (L.) Persoon in shallower water and around the margins. The dominant submerged plant was a species of *Rhizoclonium* (Chlorophyta). The remaining flora in the marshy area included *Atriplex prostrata* DC., *Parietaria diffusa* Mert. and Koch, *Dittrichia graveolens* (L.) Greuter, *Conyza bonariensis* (L.) Cronq., *Conyza floribunda* Kunth, *Chenopodium ambrosioides* L., *Cyperus alternifolius* L., *Polypogon monspeliensis* (L.) Desf., *Polypogon viridis* (Gouan) Breistr. and *Spergularia bocconeii* (Scheele) Asch. and Graebn.

In the plants examined the number of petals varied between four and six while the number of stamens varied between four and eight, this range of variation often occurring in the same plant. In view of its abundance in this locality, it is likely that *Ammannia coccinea* had been established for a considerable time.

Since the first writing of this note, the habitat of this plant has been destroyed due to alterations carried out in the harbour area.

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