

NEW RECORDS FOR THE MALTESE FLORA: *ELEUSINE INDICA* (L.) GAERTNER SUBSP. *AFRICANA* (KENNEDY-O'BYRNE) S. PHILLIPS (POACEAE) AND *CENTRANTHUS MACROSIPHON* BOISSIER (CAPRIFOLIACEAE)

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ABSTRACT

The occurrence in Malta of *Centranthus macrosiphon* Boissier and of *Eleusine indica* (L.) Gaertner subsp. *africana* (Kennedy-O'Byrne) S. Phillips as adventive weeds is reported for the first time.

1. *Eleusine indica* (L.) Gaertner subsp. *africana* (Kennedy-O'Byrne) S. Phillips

Plants originating from the Marsa Sports Club, collected in August 1996 and submitted to me by Mr David Dandria turned out to be *Eleusine indica* (L.) Gaertner subsp. *africana* (Kennedy-O'Byrne) S. Phillips. They were growing as turf weeds.

In the summer of 2000 several other specimens belonging to this taxon were found growing in flower-pots in Sliema.

Eleusine indica subsp. *africana* is variously known as Yard grass, Crowfoot grass, Goosegrass and Crabgrass (Bews, 1929) and is a native of tropical Africa but is a widespread weed especially in tropical and subtropical climates. It is also more or less naturalised in several parts of the Mediterranean area.

The most obvious differences from subsp. *indica*, (which is not recorded in the Maltese islands) are the prominently ciliate ligule, lower glume with 2-3 nerves (as against one nerve) and a generally more robust habit (Cope & Hosni, 1991; Stace, 1995). It is suspected that, at least in the case of the Sliema specimens, the plants were accidentally introduced in the seed bank of the compost of imported ornamental plants.

Although this is the first record for this taxon from the Maltese Islands, Borg (1927) records *Eleusine coracana* (L.) Gaertn as a weed from San Anton Gardens in Attard. However this has not persisted and is long extinct. Borg recorded the plant as *Eleusine*

indica (L.) Gaertn. Var. *coracana* Gaertn. which he later "corrects" to "var. *coracasana* Gaertn." (Borg, 1935). This is known as Finger Millet (Ryves *et al.*, 1996) or African Millet (Bailey, 1949) as well as by numerous native names. It is widely cultivated as a cereal in India and elsewhere.

Specimens studied: Marsa Sports Club, Marsa, Malta, leg. David Dandria, viii.1996; Sliema, weed in flower pots, leg. Edwin Lanfranco, 20.vii.2000.

2. *Centranthus macrosiphon* Boissier

Several specimens of *Centranthus macrosiphon* Boissier were encountered at Ta' Qali on the 16th May 1996 where they were growing as weeds in a flowerbed.

The plants were all rather stunted so that they did not develop the thickened hollow stem characteristic of the species; however they were readily separated from the fairly frequent native *Centranthus calcitrapae* (L.) Dufresne because of their much longer corolla tube (6-8 mm as against 1-2 mm).

Centranthus macrosiphon is endemic to the south of Spain (Murcia and Andalucia) and northern Morocco (Guinea Lopez & Ceballos Jimenez, 1974). It is also naturalised in the vicinity of Naples and possibly in Pianosa (Pignatti, 1982).

Specimen studied: Ta' Qali (l/o Attard, Malta), weed in flowerbed, 16.v.1996, leg. E. Lanfranco. Deposited in the author's private herbarium.

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Note: Most floras place this and related taxa in the family Valerianaceae. However with a better understanding of phylogenetic relationships, thanks to macromolecular techniques, it is now apparent that the Valerianaceae, together with Dipsacaceae and most of the traditional Caprifoliaceae form one monophyletic clade (Judd *et al.*, 1999).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author is indebted to Mr. David Dandria for providing the Marsa Sports Club specimens.

(Received 3rd August 2000)

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