SHORT COMMUNICATIONS

New records for the Maltese flora: *Pancratium foetidum* Pomel (Family: Amaryllidaceae)

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The genus *Pancratium* is represented in the Maltese flora by *P. maritimum* L., typical of coastal sands. This was first recorded by Zerafa (1831). Brenner (1838) records *P. illyricum* L. from sandy beaches (presumably Ramla) in Gozo. In this he was followed by Grech Delicata (1853) who cites both species and giving the latter from Ramla in Gozo, and as flowering in August/September. But, as Sommier & Caruana Gatto (1915) correctly state, true *P. illyricum* flowers in spring and is not a sand-dwelling species. The record of *P. illyricum* can therefore be attributed to confusion with *P. maritimum*, a typical species of coastal sands which flowers in summer.

On the 30th September 1963, one of us (HJS) encountered an unusual *Pancratium* in Mellieha Bay and collected some material for cultivation. This however failed to flower regularly, the last flowerings being in 1995 and 2001. This species has now been identified as *P. foetidum* Pomel, native of NW Africa, from Morocco to Libya (EI Gadi, 1978). Although this latter species is vegetatively similar to *P. maritimum*; so that the two species are indistinguishable in the field when not in flower/fruit, they can be readily separated when flowering/fruiting. Thus the flowers of *P. foetidum* are considerably smaller than those of *P. maritimum* while the flowers are ill-smelling in contrast with the fragrant flowers of *P. maritimum*. In Malta, *P. foetidum* flowers mainly in Late September and October while *P. maritimum* flowers mainly in summer with only a brief overlap in the flowering period between the two species. *P. foetidum* has stamens about equal to the coronal teeth while in *P. maritimum* these are longer. The fruit in *P. foetidum* is oblong in contrast to the subglobose fruit of *P. maritimum* and carries much smaller seed.

It is unlikely that this species is introduced and it has probably been overlooked because of the identical vegetative habit and rarity of flowering. The original site from where the plants were collected no longer exists since a road has been constructed right through. Nevertheless, since it is easily overlooked, it is not unlikely that it still exists in the wild. Since there is material in cultivation, it is possible to plan a recovery program to reintroduce it in the wild.

Live material is deposited in the collection of HJS while herbarium material is deposited in the private herbarium of EL.

REFERENCES

Grech Delicata (1853) - *Flora Melitensis*. xvi + 49pp. Malta
Zerafa S. (1831) *Florae Melitensis Thesaurus sive polkantarum enumeratio quae in Melitae Gaulosque insulis aut indigenae aut vulgarissimae occurring Malta*. (Accepted 30th October 2001)

New records for the Maltese flora: *Centaurea acaulis* L. (Family: Asteraceae)

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*Centaurea acaulis* L. is native to Tunisia and Algeria (Pottier-Alapetite, 1981) and is also known to occur in Lampedusa, one of the Pelagian Islands, 210km south of Sicily, 128 km from the Tunisian coast (Bartolo et al. 1988) and 150 km from Malta (Sommier, 1908), and in the north of Spain (Guinea Lopez & Ceballos Jimenez, 1974). In the February of 2001, one of us (RB)

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encountered a population of this species in leaf on the Nuffara plateau in Gozo. This flowered in the second week of April (Buttigieg, 2001). This population occurred in a rocky steppe community. The chief accompanying species were Oxalis pescaprae (which had dried up by the time C. acaulis was in flower), Psoralea bituminosa, Stipa capensis, Carlina involucrata, Mercurialis annua, Silene colorata, Calendula arvensis, Convolvulus althaeoides, Lagurus ovatus, Sonchus oleraceus, Ferula communis and Galactites tomentosa, thus a mixture of typical steppic elements and opportunistic species of disturbed ground indicating the somewhat degraded nature of the site. The soil in the area where C. acaulis was found was alkaline with a pH of 8.1, the highest recorded on the plateau, the minimum recorded being 7.7 (Buttigieg R., op. cit.). Although confined to this part of the plateau, the population was quite large, including over a hundred flowering individuals as well as numerous non-flowering specimens and covering an area of some 30m². The impression was that the population must have been established for a considerable time.

The first record for Lampedusa was provided by Sommier (op. cit.), who states that it was brought to his attention in 1907 but to have been introduced about twenty years before that date. Although the extra-African populations are reputed to be introduced (Sommier, op. cit., Guinea Lopez & Ceballos Jimenes, op. cit.), it is possible that in the case of the Maltese islands and Lampedusa the relatively recent appearance may be a case of natural range extension due to the close proximity to Tunisia where it is common (Pottier-Alapetite, op. cit.). It may also have been introduced with bird-seed imported from Tunisia for use by trappers.

A voucher specimen is deposited in the private herbarium of EL.

REFERENCES


(Accepted 30th October 2001)