



Centaurea ibn-tattoui (Asteraceae), a new narrow endemic species from north-eastern Morocco

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Abstract

Centaurea ibn-tattoui is described and illustrated as a new species from north-eastern Morocco. Intermediate involucre bracts and leaves are the discriminant features separating it from other closely related taxa of *C. sect. Acrocentron*.

Key words: *Centaurea* sect. *Acrocentron*, Compositae

Introduction

The inventory of Moroccan flora is rapidly increasing: during the period 1989–2013, the number of known taxa increased by about 15% (Ibn Tattou & Fennane 1989, Fennane & Ibn Tattou 2012), as a consequence of the great diversity of its flora and the fact that numerous sectors of this country still remain under-prospected. These authors thus evaluated the national flora as having around 4 200 taxa in 1989, then around 5 000 taxa in 2012; Dobignard & Chatelain (2013) recently listed around 5 350 taxa in this country. Taxa new to science are regularly described, and this fact highlights the great importance of further field explorations.

Field surveys run in 2011 by botanists of the Emirates Center for Wildlife Propagation (ECWP) in the Debdou mountains and the Guercif plain (north-eastern Morocco) assessed a rich area with numerous taxa new to this sector. Further morphological studies on plants collected in 2011 (based on dry material) led the authors to describe a species new to science, belonging to the genus *Centaurea* Linnaeus (1753: 909).

Centaurea ibn-tattoui M. Chambouleyron, M. Bidat & J.F. Léger, *sp. nov.* Figs. 1–5

This new taxon belongs to *Centaurea* sect. *Acrocentron* (Cassini 1826: 37) Candolle (1837: 586), and is close to five taxa: *C. carolipauana* Fernández Casas & Susanna (1982: 2), *C. lainzii* Fernández Casas (1975: 9), *C. occasus* Fernández Casas (1997: 221), *C. prolongoi* Boiss. ex Candolle (1838: 303), endemic to the western Mediterranean Basin, and *C. tauromenitana* Gussone (1844: 512), endemic to Sicily. It differs from the latter by its smaller and less lobed leaves, and from the first four by its intermediate and inner involucre bracts with a lacinate, scarious appendage (Fig. 1) which is usually not spiny (except sometimes a short stiff spine on the intermediate bracts, soon deciduous). The involucre bracts appear to be rather variable, as shown in Fig. 1, but generally with a characteristic large and scarious appendage.

Type:—MOROCCO. Debdou mountains, Province of Guercif, Municipality of Mahirija (more known as Lamrija, locally), at a place called Nif Ziane, on cliffs, elevation 800 m, coordinates (WGS84): N 33.87811° / W 3.39477°, 28 June 2013, M. Chambouleyron *s.n.* (Holotype: ECWP!, isotypes: RAB!, BC!, P!).

Diagnosis:—Hemicryptophyte (perennial), 30–70 cm tall. Stems erect, branched. Young plant covered with dense glandulous hairs, quickly disappearing with age (only scarce, short glandulous hairs remain on the leaf veins). Stem lanate at petiole insertion of lower leaves. Leaves alternate, green, with a central vein white-yellow to green, margins and sometimes faces scabrid. Basal and lower cauline leaves 10–22 × 1.5–3 cm (including petiole), decreasing in size from base to top, petiolate, lyrate-pinnatifid or lyrate-pinnatisect, with lobules oblong, lanceolate or ovate-lanceolate, with margins entire or sparsely dentate. Upper leaves entire, narrowly lanceolate and sessile. Capitula

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