

The rediscovery of *Ophioglossum vulgatum* in Cyprus after 78 years

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Abstract. – *Ophioglossum vulgatum* recorded from Cyprus in 1905 and in 1939 was re-discovered in 2017. Although in the Red Data Book of the Flora of Cyprus it is classified as Regionally Extinct, based on recent data it should be characterised as Critically Endangered.

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Introduction

Ophioglossum vulgatum L. was first collected from Cyprus in 1905 by Jens Holmboe at “grassy places near the water-springs at Panagia Trikoukia near Prodromo ...” (Holmboe 1914: 27). This specimen, although cited in the Flora of Cyprus, has not been examined by Meikle (1985). However, there is no reason to consider that it was a misidentification because the species was known to Holmboe since he collected also in the same year *O. lusitanicum* L. near Agia Napa and Xylofagou (Holmboe 1914, Meikle 1985). The second and last collection of the species was in 1939 by Harald Lindberg (Lindberg 1946, Meikle 1985).

New record

Since 1990 the two locations where the species was found in the past, as well as other sites with similar habitat were surveyed. From 1999 to 2006, the efforts were intensified during fieldwork carried out for the preparation of the Red Data Book of the Flora of Cyprus. However, in spite of the repeated searches the species was not found. In addition, in both locations of the past collections there have been human induced disturbances and changes in the hydrological conditions, which has led to the conclusion that the species was extinct (Regionally Extinct (RE); Christodoulou 2007).

During a routine search, in late June 2017, in the Troodos area *O. vulgatum* was found growing on moist grassy ground (27.6.2017, Christodoulou, Paradisis & Iosif CYP6604). Photographs of the species can be found in the online Flora of Cyprus (Hand & al. 2011). The population at this location consists of approximately 250 plants (mature individuals with a sterile lamina and a fertile spike). The species seems to be established in the area for many years. A possible reason for being overlooked is the fact that both the sterile lamina and fertile spike are completely green, blending perfectly with its surrounding vegetation and thus very difficult to be spotted.

Conservation status

Although the population size and the distribution of *O. vulgatum* are not precisely known, as a result of its recent rediscovery, an attempt to classify the species in one of the IUCN categories (IUCN Standards and Petitions Subcommittee 2014) has been made. Considering the geographic range (extent of occurrence and area of occupancy) as well as the number of locations and the extent of its habitat, *O. vulgatum* can be now characterised as Critically Endangered (CR; IUCN criteria: B1ab(iii)+2ab(iii)).

Recent experience has shown that visitors caused habitat disturbance that led to damage and degradation of the populations of threatened plants in the wider Troodos area. Therefore we refrain from giving detailed information of the exact location and ecology of the species due to the small population and the sensitive habitat, which can be easily disturbed by visitors.

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