

## A pink-flowered variant of *Centaurea prespana* (Asteraceae) in NW Greece

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**Abstract.** *Centaurea prespana* is a yellow-flowered species related to *C. pelia* DC. It was first discovered in NW Greece near the Albanian border. A pink-flowered *Centaurea* collected from the Prespa area is regarded as a variant of *C. prespana*.

**Key words:** *Centaurea* (Asteraceae: sect. *Acrolophus*), colour variant, flora, NW Greece

***Centaurea prespana* Rech. fil.**, a yellow-flowered species of section *Acrolophus* DC., was first described by Karl Heinz Rechinger in *Annales Mus. Goulandris* (Rechinger 1975). Its affinities are with *C. pelia* DC. from central and eastern Greece. The type collection was based on a specimen collected by Elli Stamatiadou from the Goulandris Natural History Museum. It originated from the Florina district in NW Greece near the Albanian border (Stamatiadou 15927, holo. W; iso. ATH). Since then it has been found in several other localities in NW Greece, namely North Central and N Pindos. It was omitted from the *Centaurea* account in *Flora Europaea* published in 1976.

In the year 2000, during studies on characteristic species of Central European plant communities in Greece, Andreas Schuler discovered a pink-flowered *Centaurea* in the district of Florinis, NW Greece which could not easily be determined using the account provided in *Flora Europaea* (Tutin & al. 1976). It was growing in crevices of NW- and NE-exposed cliff faces and also on stony ground at the base of the calcareous cliffs and screes near the edge of Lake Megali Prespa, NW of

the village of Psarades and north of the frontier post of Koula. The vegetation in the vicinity was rather sparse with *Centranthus ruber*, *Crepis fraasii*, *Crepis neglecta* subsp. *neglecta*, *Euphorbia myrsinites*, *Festuca valesiaca*, *Geranium lucidum*, *Micromeria juliana*, *Poa bulbosa* and *Sedum acre* observed as accompanying species.

We decided that our plant (Fig. 1) represented a pink-flowered form of the normally yellow-flowered *C. prespana* as it has many features in common with the latter, not least the strongly pectinate-ciliate middle phyllaries which later recurve at the apex. Plants with pinkish-purple florets are not unknown in some predominantly white- or bluish-flowered species of *Centaurea*, e.g., *C. pindicola*. However, this is the first documentation of a pink form of *C. prespana* in the Balkans. It is fortunate that type material of *C. prespana* from NW Greece was available to confirm our identification. A description of the pink variant is now provided together with full citation of specimens.

Herbaceous perennial with several to numerous stems arising from a woody base. Stems ascending, rarely procumbent, 11–35 (–50) cm tall, striate, leafy,

divaricately branched above, white-arachnoid-lanate when young, later greyish-tomentose. Basal and lower leaves pinnatisect to pinnatipartite, 2–7 × 1–2 cm (excluding 4–13 mm long petioles), greyish-green, white-arachnoid-lanate when young; segments linear to narrowly lanceolate, 5–10 × 1–2 mm, entire, pungent-mucronulate at apex. Cauline leaves sessile, similar but smaller; segments filiform, 0.5–1 mm broad, revolute; leaves immediately below capitulum linear, undivided. Capitulum solitary, terminal; involucre narrowly urceolate, 12–16 × 7–11 mm. Phyllaries imbricate, 4-seriate, longitudinally ridged, pale green, subcoriaceous, glabrous. Middle phyllaries c. 8 mm long; appendages ferruginous to dark brown, triangular-lanceolate, 3–4 mm, strongly pectinate-ciliate (cilia 6–8 on each side, 2–2.5 mm long), arcuate-recurved at apex; base hyaline-auriculate or divided into additional shorter cilia; terminal spinule 1.5–2.2 mm long. Innermost phyllaries oblong, to 8 mm, green suffused purplish in upper half, with broad hyaline margin. Marginal florets neuter; corolla pale lilac, infundibular, 5-fid, glabrous; tube c. 1 cm; segments linear-ligulate, 6–7 mm, acute. Central florets hermaphrodite, pinkish-purple, tubular; tube c. 1 cm; segments 5–6 mm, darker pink. Anther tube white, glabrous. Achenes greyish-white, 3.5–4 mm, truncate at apex, ridged, puberulent. Pappus white, several-seriate; bristles finely scabridulous, unequal, longest 4–5 mm.

#### Specimens examined:

**Greece:** Nomos Florinis, Eparchia Florinis: near village of Psarades, limestone cliffs, 860 m, 40°50' N, 21°02' E, 8 June 2000, A. Schuler 00/156 (C! herb. Schuler!); *loc. ibid.*, 15 July 2006, D. Häckel & A. Schuler 151 (herb. Kit!); isthmus between Megali and Mikri Prespa, near frontier post of Koula, calcareous, stony ruderal places, 855 m, 40°49' N, 21°05' E, 15 July 2006, D. Häckel & A. Schuler 152 (GB!).



Fig. 1. *Centaurea prespana* (pink) in native habitat (photo D. Häckel).

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#### References

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