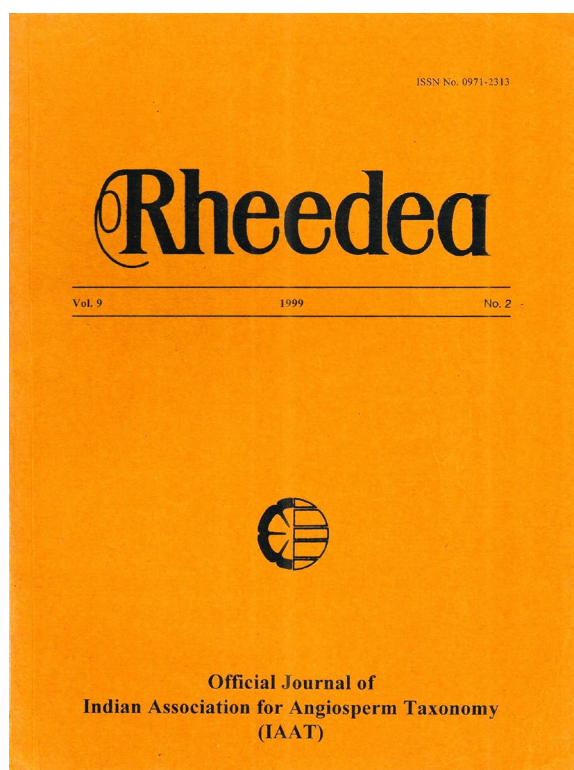




Stellaria alsinoides Boiss. & Buhse (Caryophyllaceae) - a new record for India from subalpine western Himalaya

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***Stellaria alsinoides* Boiss. & Buhse
(Caryophyllaceae) - a new record for India from
subalpine western Himalaya**

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Abstract

Stellaria alsinoides Boiss. & Buhse, a new record to Indian flora is described.

INTRODUCTION

After the extensive and intensive plant exploration of Kullu district (Himachal Pradesh) during 1988-1992, 930 species of spermatophytes were gathered. Out of these 32 species were found to be additions to the flora of Himachal Pradesh (Sharma & Dhaliwal; 1997 a,b) and *Oenothera affinis* Camb. was recorded as a new report for Indian flora (Dhaliwal & Sharma, 1995). Meanwhile, some specimens collected from the district were sent to Kew Herbarium for identification/confirmation. One of these was identified from there as *Stellaria alsinoides* Boiss. & Buhse. A perusal of the taxonomic literature dealing with the Indian Caryophyllaceae (Edgeworth & J.D.Hooker, 1874; Majumdar, 1993) revealed that the species has not been reported earlier from India. Apparently, it is an eastward extension of distribution from Pakistan to India. A diagnostic description and an illustration (Fig. 1) are provided for easy identification.

Stellaria alsinoides Boiss. & Buhse in Nouv. Mem. Soc. Nat. Mosc. 12 : 41.1860; Boiss, Fl.Orient. 1: 705. 1867; Mizushima in Kitamura, Fl. Afghan. 117. 1960; Ghazanfar & Y. Nasir in E. Nasir & Ali, Fl. Pakistan 175 : 29, f.4 D-E.1986.

A slender, glabrous or so annual. Stems 3-12 cm long, capillary, erect or ascending, glabrous or sparsely hairy towards base. Leaves few, opposite, 0.5-1.5 cm long, linear-subulate, entire, acute, glabrous or sparsely ciliate at base. Flowers in dichasial cymes, on capillary pedicels. Sepals 4, free, 3-5 mm long, lanceolate, scarious-margined, midrib prominent, glabrous. Petals shorter than the sepals, white, shortly bilobed into linear lobes. Styles 2. Capsule slightly shorter than the sepals, ovoid-oblong, splitting to the base by 4 valves. Seeds few, about 1 mm in diameter, tuberculate, brown.

Among the Indian *Stellarias*, this species is immediately recognized because of its distinctive habit showing capillary stems and pedicels and in possessing only a few linear-subulate

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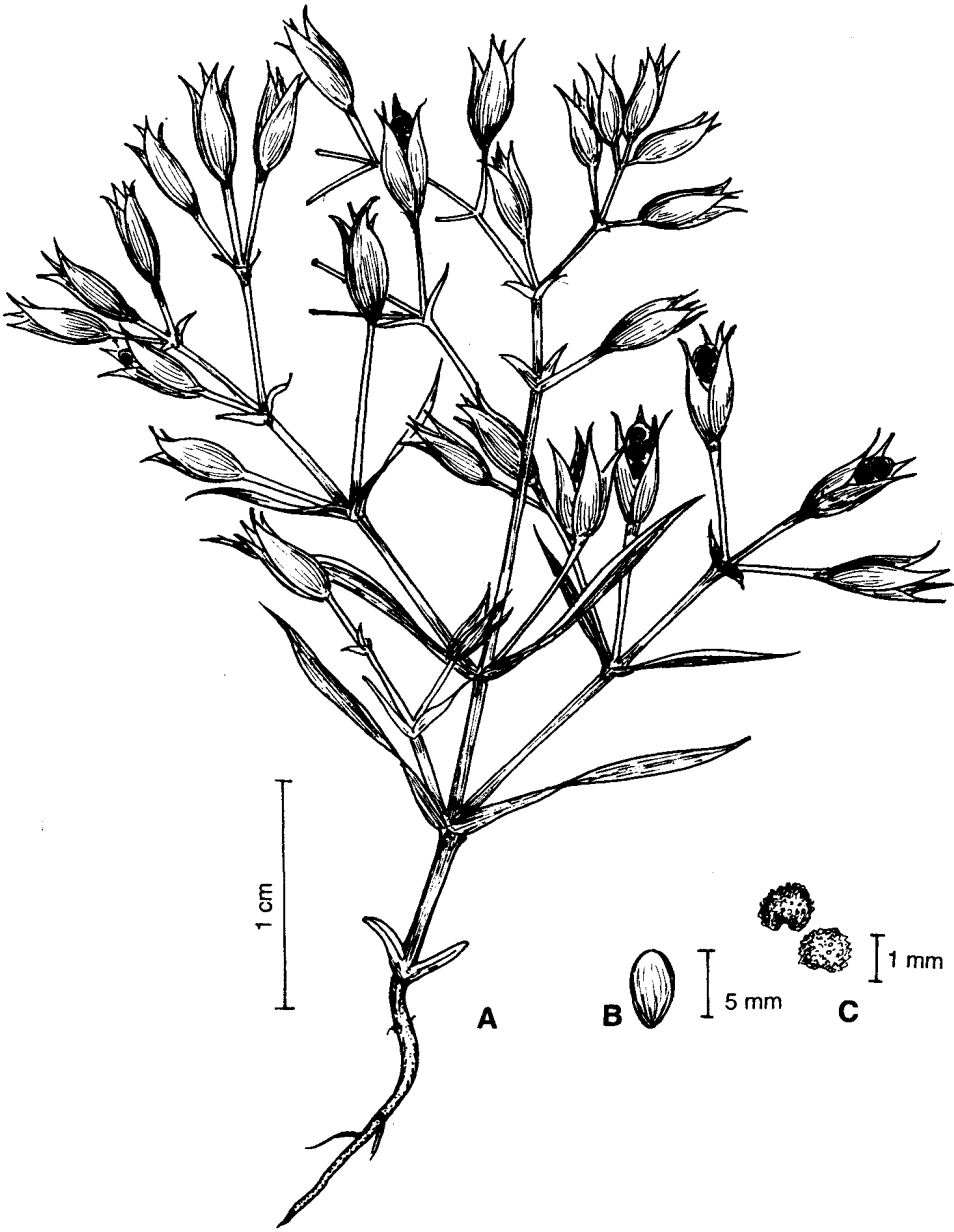


Fig. 1. *Stellaria alsinoides* Boiss. & Buhse. A. Habit; B. Capsule; C. Seeds.

Stellaria alsinoides

leaves. Only two other Indian species, namely *S. himalayensis* Majumdar (plants tomentose upwards) and *S. webbiana* (Benth. ex G. Don) Edgew. & Hook.f. (plants glaucous) are also characterized by the combination of features exhibited by the present taxon, like 4, free sepals, 2 styles and capsule equalling or smaller than the sepals. However, in both these species the petals are twice as long as sepals. In *S. alsinoides*, on the other hand, the plants are neither glaucous nor tomentose upwards and petals are smaller than the sepals.

Ecology : This species was collected at an altitude of about 3,500 m. The plants appear in sandy, moist localities during April-May when snow melts and complete their life cycle in just three months.

Flowers: May, *Fruits*: June.

Specimens examined : Rohtang, D.. S. Dhaliwal 16480 (PUN).

Distribution : India (Himachal Pradesh). Iran, Afghanistan, Pamir Alai, Turkmenistan, Pakistan.

Acknowledgements

Grateful thanks are due to Dr. V. J. Nair, Indian Liaison Officer, for identifying the species at Kew Herbarium; and to Dr. D. K. Singh, Deputy Director, Botanical Survey of India, Dehra Dun for providing with some pertinent literature.

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DESCRIPTION
at manipallana Prabhakar Raju et Venkata Raju sp. nov. (Fig. 1).

Lyathocline purpurea (Buch Ham. ex D. Don) O. Ktze. proxime affinis, sed differt
is vegetativis globosis albo-lanatis ad basin ramorum; foliis radicalibus caulinisque
; bracteis involucralibus sub-acuminatis, ad marginem non scariosis; antheris 2 mm longis
funda sagittatis cum auriculis acutis.

Type: INDIA: Andhra Pradesh, Adilabad Dist., Pochera stream, 27 February 1954, Venkata
Raju and Prabhakar Raju 1523b (holotype, MH, isotypes, SKU).

Erect aromatic herb, up to 40 cm, stem simple, often branched from base, ultimate branches

in dichotomies, pubescent with hairs and glands, axillary buds densely covered by persistent
white silky hairs. Leaves simple, radical and cauline, cauline ones alternate, sessile, one veined
from base, veins grooved on upper side, raised below; puberulous and glandular on both surfaces,
coriaceous, uppermost ovate, lower spatulate or oblong, 1-13 x 0.4-3 cm, lyrate or deeply