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Index to the rare endemic vascular plants of Europe

S. M. WALTERS

European Conservation Year is a particularly appropriate time to announce the preparation of an index to rare vascular plants endemic to Europe. The scheme here described is financed by a small grant under the International Biological Programme, and utilises the services provided by the Biological Records Centre of the British Nature Conservancy at the Monks Wood Experimental Station, Huntingdonshire, England.

The scheme has the modest, short-term aim of bringing together the minimum information necessary to answer the question: which vascular plants endemic to Europe are threatened with extinction?

The publication of *Flora Europaea*, two volumes of which have already appeared, makes it possible to prepare quickly a preliminary index, consisting essentially of the name of all those species endemic to Europe which are confined to a single country (or in the case of certain small island groups, not more than 2 "countries").

This preliminary list for the two published volumes contains some 600 species; on this basis, it seems that the total may be of the order of 1500, that is, about 10% of the whole European vascular flora. We know, therefore, roughly the size of the problem; and although it is obvious that this preliminary list will contain a good many species which are locally abundant and not in any danger of extinction, it is equally obvious that another group of species must exist which are widely scattered in several European countries but which are rapidly disappearing from all or most of their old habitats. It seems therefore unlikely that our final 'refined' list will be very significantly shorter than the preliminary one.

Preparation of the preliminary list is basically a straightforward matter of abstraction from the accounts written for *Flora Europaea*. The Editorial & Organising Committee have given their permission for unpublished manuscripts to be used to extract the preliminary data, and the preparation of volumes 3 and 4 is now so far advanced that the preliminary index should be virtually complete for all except the Monocotyledons by the end of 1971. The Index is being prepared on 80-column punched cards, so that mechanical sorting and print-offs of the required data are readily effected.

		IREP 1/70	
<u>INDEX TO RARE ENDEMIC VASCULAR PLANTS OF EUROPE</u>			
COUNTRY	HS. (SPAIN)	SPECIES	LOCALITY
		SILENE DICLINIS (Lag.)	S.E. SPAIN (VALENCIA)
		M. Lainz	1970
		LOCALITY (detailed)	U.T.M. GRID REFERENCE (or LATITUDE/LONGITUDE)
		JÁTIVA (locus classicus)	
		SIMAT DE VALLDIGNA (Galiano 1967)	U.T.M. Grid Y.J.2.
		cf. Morisset & Bozman, New Phytol. 68:1235 (1969)	
LOCALITY MAP		AREA COVERED	
		c. 25 km. sq.	
		COVERAGE—UNIFORM/IRREGULAR	
		TOTAL NUMBER OF PLANTS	
		MATURE	FLOWERING
		SEEDLING	
EFFECTIVE REPRODUCTION			
BY SEED			
VEGETATIVE			
CONSERVATION STATUS OF SITE			

Please give any other information which seems to you relevant on the reverse side of this form, and return form when completed to:

Dr. S. M. Walters
1 Brookside
Cambridge
England

Fig. 1. — Standard form completed for the endemic Spanish species *Silene diclinis*.

The second stage is to use the index cards to print off country lists of "rare endemics". Each list for a particular country can then be submitted to the expert(s) in that country (or elsewhere) with request for more detailed information on the distribution and status of each species. A standard form is available for this purpose (fig. 1).

On the basis of the information received, one might hope to be able to answer more realistically certain practical questions about floristic conservation in Europe, amongst which the most important are:

- How many rare endemics are already enjoying some degree of protection?
- Could a small number of "floristic nature reserves" be set up which would protect a significant proportion of the species not already protected?
- Are there species which need urgently saving from extinction by local protection or by rescue of stock into cultivation in botanic gardens?

There is a great interest in the problems of conservation at present, and it seems likely that, if we can assemble the information rapidly and efficiently, much irreparable loss to the European (and the world) flora can be avoided in this new decade.

DISCUSSION

HÜRLIMANN inquires about the situation of species endemic in small areas (e.g. mountains) crossed by the borderline of two countries. Such species are not endemic to one country or area, but may nevertheless be very rare and need conservation.

WALTERS replies that the preliminary list is not intended to be a closed list: it provides only the basic information, and is open both to additions and subtractions. To a certain extent, the fact that mountain chains rich in endemics form boundaries between countries has already been taken in consideration: many Pyrenean endemics, recorded from both France and Spain, have been listed.

GREUTER emphasizes the advantage of considering, in a first approach, the endemic species, which are relatively well known even in incompletely explored areas. Concerning Crete, the required information will be readily available, even for the volumes of *Flora Europaea* not yet published. There is, however, the problem of the delimitation of taxa. This project considers only species, and is based on their circumscription as adopted in *Flora Europaea*. Regional botanists who, as a rule, are very much attached to their endemics, will probably disagree in some instances with the broad circumscription and synthetic treatment of species proposed by *Flora Europaea*. If such controversial taxa become extinct, the question of their status will of course be settled. They present, nevertheless, a particular interest from a taxonomic point of view and seem to deserve conservation as much as the universally recognized endemic species.

WALTERS makes it clear that his project is to a certain degree independent from his *Flora Europaea* editorial activities. He will be grateful for information on any endemic taxa which are considered, by regional advisers or by other persons, to be of interest for conservation, even though they may not be recognized at specific level in *Flora Europaea*.

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