

Plantago webbii Barn., New to Gran Canaria

By P. Sunding* and G. Kunkel**

This small and densely branched subshrub was found on the rocky slopes above Cruz Grande, towards the Paso de la Plata, central Gran Canaria, during a joint excursion in March 1969. It was temporarily left aside as an unnamed form of *Plantago arborescens* Poir. A later collection in the same locality (Kunkel No. 13272) called our attention again and, after checking herbarium material and descriptions in relevant literature (see below), agreement was reached that our finding should be referred to as *Plantago webbii* Barn. (Barnéoud, Monogr. Plantag., p. 50 (1845); Barnéoud in Webb & Berthelot, Phytogr. Canar. 3, p. 188 (1846) and pl. 198 [1848]).

According to Lems (1960:65) some morphological differences seem to exist between populations of this species in Tenerife and La Palma, the islands from where the species has been known so far. Even the Gran Canaria specimens seem to differ in some respects from specimens seen from the other two islands (less compact growth, longer leaves, an inflorescence consisting of two, rarely three flowers). The populations in the three islands may perhaps be treated as different subtaxa, but as our material for judging this is still sparse and as we do not yet know if the differences will prove to be constant, we find it safer to leave that question for a later study.

Main differences between *Plantago webbi* and *P. arborescens* (cp. even Barnéoud (1845), Webb & Berthelot (1844-1850), and Pilger [1937]):

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P. webbii

subshrub \pm 0,3 m high
leaves normally adpressed
entire plant densely pilose

inflorescence bracts
4.5 — 5 mm long
sepals 3.5 — 4 mm long
corolla tube 2 — 2.5 mm long

P. arborescens

subshrub \pm 0.5 m high
leaves spreading
plant shortly hispid-hairy,
with or without single
long hairs

infl. bracts (5-) 5.5 — 7
mm long
sepals 4 — 5 mm long
corolla tube 4 — 5 mm long

In the mentioned locality in Gran Canaria. *P. webbii* was found on a dry and rocky slope, at an altitude of about 1,400 m a.s.l. Only a few individuals were seen, but as the terrain around is rather steep and precipitous, the species may be more common than at first apperant. Other species common in the nearest area are *Cytisus proliferus* sens. lat., *Lavandula minutolii*, *Andryala pinnatifida*, *Lobularia intermedia*, and *Sideritis (Leucophae) dasygnaphala*. Almond trees are cultivated all over the slope.

According to Lems (l.c.) *P. webbii* is the "subalpine counterpart of *P. arborescens*, on rocks". Burchard (1929:193) described the species and its ecology as follows: "Im Gegensatz zu der vorhergehenden Art [*P. arborescens*] ein seltener Bewohner der subalpinen Zone, in welcher er in Gruppen im Geröll als niedriger halbkugeliger, durch seine weisswollig behaarten linealischen Blätter und dicht verworrenen Äste und Ästchen kompakt aussehender kleiner Steppenbusch auftritt." (Judging from our material and from herbarium material seen from the western islands, the term "weisswollig behaarte Blätter" seems not very appropriate.) Also the ecological data given by Ceballos & Ortuño (1951:431) indicates the same type of environment for this subalpine species, even if the latter authors also report a find (atypical and probably accidental) in the lowlands of Tenerife.

Herbarium material of *Plantago webbii* from the locality in Gran Canaria are kept in the private herbarium of Kunkel and in the herbarium of the Botanical Museum, University of Oslo (O).

R e s u m e n

Se describe el hallazgo de *Plantago webbii*, una especie conocida anteriormente como endémica en Tenerife y La Palma y encontrada por primera vez también en Gran Canaria, entre Cruz Grande y el Paso de la Plata (Tirajana). Se discute la variabilidad de la especie y se menciona las diferencias principales entre *Plantago webbii* y *P. arborescens*.

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