COUSINIA (SECT. HAUSSKNECHTIANAE) KARKASENSIS, A NEW SPECIES FROM KARKAS MTs. IN CENTRAL IRAN

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Received 09.10.2010. Accepted for publication 10.11.2010.


Cousinia karkasensis a narrow endemic from central Iran is described as a new species to science. The new species belongs to Cousinia sect. Haussknechtianae. Relationships between the new species and other species is discussed. The new species is however more resembles to C. gatchsaranica based on the morphological characters, it is found to be more related to C. raphiocephala another member of the section Haussknechtianae, based on the molecular results.

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Key words. Cousinia, Asteaceae, Sect. Haussknechtianae, new species, Iran.

Introduction

The genus Cousinia Cass. (Asteraceae, Cardueae), with 600-700 mostly endemic species (Sussana & Garcia-Jacas 2006) is one of the larger genera of the family Asteraceae and the one of the 50 larger genera of flowering plants (Frodin 2004). Cousinia is represented by more than 200 species mainly in mountainous areas of Iran (Rechinger 1986; Knapp 1987; Attar & Gahreman 2006). Since publishing of the number 90 of Flora Iranica in 1972 (Rechinger 1972) and its supplement in 1979 (Rechinger 1979), many new species have been described, and some synonyms have been made, so that the exact number of species in Iran is still unknown (Mehregan & Kadereit 2008, Assadi 2009, Attar & Mirtadzadini 2009, Djavadi & Attar 2009, Mehregan & Assadi 2009, Attar & Djavadi 2010).

Mountains of Karkas in central Iran is among of the areas less investigated by botanists. Examination of some Cousinia material collected in recent years from the eastern slopes of Karkas Mts. revealed that those material match to description of none of yet known species of Cousinia and represent a new species, which is described in this paper.

Cousinia karkasensis Mehregan & Djavadi, sp. nov.

Holotypus. Iran, Esfahan, Natanz, Tameh village, Mt. Karkas, 2300 m, 10.08.2003, Mehregan 96022 (TARI; isotypus IRAN) = Mehregan 240 (MJG; isotype). Fig. 1.

Perennis, collo residuis petiolorum comoso. Caulis 50-80 (-100) cm altus, erectus, tenuiter sulcato-striatus, in dimidio inferiore foliatus, foliis superioribus diminutis; synflorescentia subcorymbosa, ramis lateralibus
Fig. 1. Holotype of *Cousinia karkasensis* (photograph by I. Mehregan).

Yellowish green perennial plant. Root collars with remains of petioles of fallen leaves. Stem 50-80 (-100) cm high, upright, white-pale brownish, slightly sulcate, apparently glabrous, deprived of arachnoid hairs and glands, towards the apex becomes slightly arachnoid and covered with scattered yellowish sessile glands, in uppermost parts especially below the heads the number of glands is much more, leafy in lower half, diminished in upper half, branched from the middle, with lateral branches apparently longer than central capitulum, divarically branched making nearly a corymb. Leaves rigid, leathery, fragile, shining on both sides, with scattered yellowish glands on upper surface, and brownish ones at lower surface; venation pinnate-reticulate, obviously prominent on both sides; basal leaves rosulate, attenuated into petiole up to 7 cm long, with lanceolate or oblanceolate lamina up to 25 × 5 cm; sinuate-lobate at margin, with triangular lobes equipped with up to 8 mm long rigid spine; midrib thick, whitish, prominent on both sides; main lateral veins obviously perpendicular to midrib; lower and middle stem leaves similar to basal leaves but smaller, sessile, not decurrent; upper leaves much reduced, ovate or hastate-triangle in outline, semiamplexicaule at base, with apical spine much longer than the lateral spines; uppermost leaves much more diminished, distant from the heads. Heads solitary, 40-60-flowered, 25-35 mm in diam. including spines. Involucre globose or ovate, densely arachnoide, with 130-160 involucral bracts, densely glandulose, 8-seriate; outer and middle bracts linear-subulate, patent or slightly reflexed, wider at base, attenuated toward the apex, terminating into a ca. 5 mm long rigid spine; inner bracts linear-lanceolate, leathery-membranous, erect, wider towards the apex, minutely serratate along the margins, acute or acuminate. Receptacular bristles smooth. Corolla pink, 14-16 mm long; limb as long as tube or slightly shorter. Anther tube glabrous, purple. Achenes ca. 5 × 2 mm, compressed, grey-brown, attenuated at base, truncate or round at apex, irregularly dark spotted, longitudinally obscurely striated.

Further specimens studied. Esfahan, Natanz, Targh, Keshe village, Karkas Mt., 33° 26’ N, 51° 47’ E, Pahlevani & Bahramishad 54856 (IRAN); same locality, 2900-3500 m, 26.07.2009, Pahlevani & Bahramishad 54750 (IRAN).
Etymology. The specific epithet refers to the Mont Karkas where the new species was found.

Distribution and ecology. Cousinia karkasensis is an endemic species to central Iran, known only from Karkas Mountain (province Esfahan), where it was found on northern and eastern stony slopes.

Relationship and delimitation. Cousinia karkasensis is a distinct species characterized by having following characters: stems with long subcorymbose branches, lateral branches longer than central capitula; leaves sessile and semiamplexicaule, shining on both sides, diminishing upward; heads solitary, 40-60-flowered, with densely arachnoid, exappendiculate, patent-reflexed bracts; corolla pink and anther tube purple. It is morphologically related to other species of Cousinia sect. Haussknechtianae Rech. f. This section comprises few species in C & W Iran and N Iraq (Map 1.) (Rechinger 1972; Mehregan et al. 2003). Long subcorymbose branches could be found in C. haussknechtii C. Winkl. and C. gatchsaranica Mehregan, Assadi & Attar. Regarding to habit and shiny leaves, it is morphologically more resembles to C. gatchsaranica, a narrow endemic to SW Iran. Molecular studies however showed that the new species is more related to C. raphiocephala another member of the section described from mountainous regions of Muteh, W of Karkas Mts. (Mehregan & Kadereit 2009: pp. 41 & 43, sub “Cousinia sp. (240)”). The section Haussknechtianae has previously studied by Mehregan et al. (2003).

Acknowledgement
The authors are grateful to Dr Mousa Iranshahr for editing the Latin diagnosis.

References