

(103) Request for a binding decision on whether *Silene dicolor* Retz. and *S. discolor* Sm. (Caryophyllaceae) are sufficiently alike to be confused

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(103) *Silene dicolor* Retz. (1803) [Angiosp.: Caryophyll.]

Silene discolor Sm. (1809) [Angiosp.: Caryophyll.]

***Silene dicolor* Retz.**

Silene dicolor was described by Retzius (in Hoffmann, Phytogr. Bl.: 38. 1803). The species was characterized by a biennial habit, glabrous, decumbent stems, elongate and cylindrical calyx, opposite solitary and nodding flowers, a paniculate inflorescence, bifid, white to reddish petal limbs, and a three-locular capsule. This species has been treated as a synonym of *S. nutans* L. by Rohrbach (Monogr. Silene: 217. 1869), Richter (Pl. Eur. 2: 316. 1899), Rübel (in Bot. Jahrb. Syst. 47: 350. 1912), and Ascherson & Graebner (Syn. Mitteleur. Fl. 5(2): 204. 1921), but the name has apparently never been typified and we have not been able to locate any original material.

***S. discolor* Sm.**

Silene discolor was described by Smith (Fl. Graec. Prodr.: 1: 292. 1809). The species was characterized by diffuse stems, obovate leaves, a villous calyx, bifid petal limbs, which are flesh colored above (dorsal surface) and greenish below (ventral surface). The species was described from Cyprus; a Sibthorp collection at OXF appears to be original material and has been cited as the type (see: <https://herbaria.plants.ox.ac.uk/bol/SIBTHORP/image/Sib-0981.JPG/Zoom>). The species is included in floristic treatments of Crete (Turland & al., Fl. Cretan Area: 50. 1993), Cyprus (Meikle, Fl. Cyprus 1: 243. 1977), Europe (Chater & al. in Tutin & al., Fl. Eur., ed. 2, 1: 216. 1993; Euro+Med Plantbase, https://europlusmed.org/cdm_dataportal/taxon/d6610b67-2653-45f5-a1f3-f899e1a1f0d2, accessed 14 Apr 2022), Greece (Strid & Tan, Fl. Hellenica 1: 315. 1997 and Flora of Greece web https://portal.cybertaxonomy.org/flora-greece/cdm_dataportal/taxon/a959cfda-f89f-442d-afc9-0d683c1c6712, accessed 14 Apr 2022), southwestern Asia (Boissier, Fl. Orient. 1: 592–593. 1867), and Turkey (Coode & Cullen in Davis, Fl. Turkey: 2: 237. 1967).

Discussion

Although the epithet of Retzius's species was clearly spelled as '*dicolor*' in the protologue, the name has appeared as '*discolor*' in the few botanical resources in which we have seen it cited, e.g., Roth, Catal. Bot. 3: 43. 1806; Dietrich, Vollst. Lex. Gärtn. 9: 212. 1809; Steudel, Nomencl. Bot. 1: 778. 1821, ed. 2: 584. 1841; Rohrbach, l.c.; Richter, l.c.; Rübel, l.c.; and Ascherson & Graebner, l.c. It is found in IPNI (<http://www.ipni.org>) as both *Silene dicolor* and *S. discolor*; both entries refer to the same citation of the Retzius publication. This changed orthography, i.e., '*discolor*', makes it confusable with the name of Smith's species. We believe that the original spelling '*dicolor*' has no meaning. According to Retzius's description,

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the corolla of the taxon could be white to reddish. We think, therefore, that ‘*bicolor*’ could be another possible epithet for Retzius’s taxon. Did a typographic error occur in the publication of the protologue? Was it supposed to be ‘*bicolor*’ or ‘*discolor*’? Or, did Retzius intend ‘*dicolor*’ by combining a Greek prefix and a Latin adjective? Why has it been assumed to be ‘*discolor*’? Unfortunately, there is no evidence that we have found to answer these questions.

If *Silene dicolor* and *S. discolor* are indeed to be treated as homonyms, *S. discolor* Sm. would become a later homonym of *S. discolor* Retz. While *S. discolor* Sm. is recognized in most local floras (see above listing), recent monographs (e.g., Chowdhuri in Notes Roy. Bot. Gard. Edinburgh 22: 250. 1957) and treatments of *Silene* (e.g., Greuter in Taxon 44: 575. 1995), following the “POWO” link in IPNI leads to a page showing that *S. discolor* Sm. is a synonym of *S. pompeiopolitana* J. Gay ex Boiss. (<https://powo.science.kew.org/taxon/157242-1>, accessed 14 Apr 2022). We disagree with this assessment; although similar in habit, the two taxa can be distinguished on leaf shape, pedicel length, corolla color, and seed shape; see Coode & Cullen, l.c.: 238; Rohrbach, l.c.: 110; Williams in J. Linn. Soc., Bot. 32: 96. 1896.

Conclusion

We are requesting a binding decision under Art. 53.4 of the *ICN* (Turland & al. in Regnum Veg. 159. 2018) as to whether *Silene dicolor* Retz. and *S. discolor* Sm. are sufficiently alike to be confused and thus should be treated as homonyms. If there is a decision to treat the names as homonyms, *S. discolor* Sm. would be a later homonym of *S. di[s]color* Retz. Since *S. di[s]color* Retz. has mainly appeared as a synonym of *S. nutans*, has never been typified, and is not in current usage, we would propose, for the purpose of nomenclatural stability of the current usage of *S. discolor* Sm., to conserve that name against its earlier homonym *S. discolor* Retz. (‘*dicolor*’) under Art. 14 of the *ICN*.

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