

Aitchisoniella himalayensis Kashyap

Status: **Endangered EN** (B1,2b)

Class: Hepaticae

Order: Marchantiales

Family: Exormothecaceae

Description and Biology: Thallus is *Riccia* like upto 7 mm long and 3 mm wide forming intermixed bluish to yellowish-green patches. Median groove distinct at apex. Monoecious. Antheridia dorsal in 2-3 irregular rows embedded in the thallus behind the archegoniophore. Female receptacle sessile (imperfectly stalked), terminal or in between the fork of the two branches. Sporophyte with bulbous foot and a short seta. Capsule opening irregular in upper part. Elaters trispiral. Spores black or brown with distinct trilete scar.

Distribution and Habitat: Monotypic endemic in the Western Himalaya, now known only from the Kumaon region (North-West Himalaya: Mussoorie, Simla, Kuku, Dulchi Pass). Occuring in small patches on dry exposed slopes, meso-xerophytic, on moist mud-capped rocks in mixed oak (*Quercus leucotrichophora* A.Camus and *Q. incana* Roxb.) forest hillside at 2000–2950 m s m.

History and Outlook: Genus notable for its limited geographical range established by Prof. S. R. Kashyap in 1914 on the basis of collections from Mussoorie, Western Himalaya. Subsequent collections from other West Himsalyan localities where at that time it was recorded as fairly common (Kashyap 1929). The main causes of decline is habitat destructions, deforestation, development, destruction of hillside due to widening of roads. The species also seem to have a low reproductive capacity (Udar & Srivastava 1983). No site with this species is protected in the Himalaya. An attempt to transplant the species to a bryophyte garden in Kumaon failed because of lack of funds for maintenance.

References:

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