

Fulfordianthus evansii (Fulf.) Gradst.

Status: **Vulnerable (VU)** B1,2cd

Class: Hepaticae

Order: Jungermanniales

Family: Lejeuneaceae

Description and Biology: Plants are epiphytic, dark green, growing upright from a creeping rhizome. Stems are up to 2 cm long and 1.5 mm wide, irregularly branched or, when female, forked. Leaves are elliptical with a rounded apex, denticulate margins and a small ventral lobule with a long, curved tooth. The leaf cells have uniformly thickened walls and lack oil bodies. Underleaves are deeply emarginate at apex. The perianth is on a short lateral branch, with 2 innovations, and is very long and sharply 3-keeled. The species is dioicous and sex organs have been observed. Dispersal by spores is likely to occur. Vegetative reproduction is unknown.

Distribution and Habitat: *Fulfordianthus evansii* is known from a handful of localities in Central America (Guatemala, Belize, Costa Rica, Panama). Three are from the Caribbean coast and one, Barro Colorado Island (Panama) is more inland. The species grows on bark in lowland rain forest and is only known from undisturbed habitats.

History and Outlook: *Fulfordianthus evansii* is the rarest species of a small and phylogenetically isolated, neotropical genus (2 spp.). It was first collected in coastal rainforests of Belize and Guatemala, in the beginning of the 20th century. These forests have now largely disappeared. In recent years the species has turned up in 2 new localities further South in Central America: Tortuguero National Park, Costa Rica (1988, 2 collections) and Barro Colorado Island Protected Area, Panama (1993). Because of its exclusive occurrence in undisturbed Central American lowland rain forests - a habitat which has largely vanished due to heavy deforestation in the region- the species is considered endangered. Since the two recent localities are in protected areas, the continued existence of the species may be safeguarded, at least for the time being.

References

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