

# *Leucoperichaetium eremophilum* Magill

Status: **Criticall Endangered** (CR) B1,2c

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Class: Bryopsida

Order: Grimmiales

Family: Grimmiaceae

## **Description and Biology:**

A small, perennial, blackish green moss growing in irregular turfs. The stems are erect, 5–10 mm long, frequently branching, and for the most part buried in sand. The species is unique within the family because of the stark contrast between the small, bistratose, vegetative leaves and the large, hair-pointed leaves of the conspicuous, colourless perichaetia. The immersed, cup-shaped capsule with rudimentary peristome and persistent annulus will also help to identify the species.

**Distribution and Habitat:** This species is only known from Witputz in southern Namibia. The plants grew on fine sand over a quartzite outcrop, ± 1000 m. above sea level. The locality is situated on the Namib escarpment, a transition zone between the Namib Desert and the central plateau. This zone is characterised by mountain ranges, rocky outcrops, and inselbergs. It is an arid, winter rainfall area with mean annual rainfall of 50–100 mm. The site is part of the Succulent Karoo Biome, an important centre of succulent plant, reptile and invertebrate endemism.

**History and Outlook:** *Leucoperichaetium eremophilum* Magill was found by Dave Hardy on 2 September 1978 near the Witputz Police Station, Namibia. Two collections were made and R.E. Magill, who described the species, chose the specimen *Hardy* 4864 as the Holotype. The original specimens are in PRE and isotypes were distributed to H, MO, NY and US. Although the locality may be threatened by farming and mining activities, similar habitats exist in the nearby Sperrgebiet, a largely undisturbed, protected mining area of 26 000 km<sup>2</sup>. Bryophytes are undercollected in the (semi) arid south-western region of Africa and it is quite possible that this species may be present in other parts of the Succulent Karoo Biome.

**References:** Barnard, P.(ed.) 1998. *Biological diversity in Namibia: a country study*: 1–325. Namibian National Biodiversity Taskforce, Windhoek.

Magill, R.E. 1987. *Flora of Southern Africa*. Bryophyta 1,2: 271–274. National Botanical Institute, South Africa.

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