

Ochyraea tatrensis Vána

Status: **Critically Endangered (CR) D**

Class: Musci

Order: Hypnobryales

Family: Amblystegiaceae

Description and Biology: A medium sized moss, 3-4 cm long, forming dark-green to olive-green mats with a curious form of the leaves. These are falcate and bi- or tri-stratose which distinguish it from most other mosses and lack a discrete costa. The leaf tips are obtuse and the leaf margins are plane and more or less entire. Dioecious. The species is only once found with sporophytes (two capsules).

Distribution and Habitat: Known only from three localities in Europe both in central Slovakia in the Nízke Tatry national park, in the area of proposed reservation "Chabenec". All three localities are near each other and at altitude c.1600 m. Type locality is just below a tourist road, the other in a closed valley somewhat far away from civilisation. Each site is not longer than 50 m. The species is growing on granitic stones or rocks under water, in stream, and mostly below small waterfalls. The characters of the habitat are about the same as for *Hygrohypnum smithii*, which it is growing on almost every stone in this stream at the two sites.

History and Outlook: *Ochyraea* was first recorded by Jirí Vána 1985 on a small rock in a stream in Slovakia and later on at another site along the same water system. The moss still occurs at all sites inside the national park, but the quantity of the population is very decreasing. The moss is very sensitive to pollution and any decline in the quality of the air and water of this catchment can threat the species to extinction as well as any change in the water regime. Maybe also the competition of the more aggressive and expansive species *Hygrohypnum smithii* is responsible for the threat of this species. If the sites can be further protected from pollution, tourist roads, bridges etc. the species may survive. However, perhaps even more important is to prevent any changes in the water regime, since that could promote the aggressive competing species *Hygrohypnum smithii*, who in the long run most probably will out-compete the *Ochyraea* population.

References: Somogyi, J. (1999): *Ochyraea tatrensis* (Bryophyta) – distribution and endangerment. *Biológia* 54: 119-120.

Vána, J. 1986: *Ochyraea tatrensis* gen. et spec. nov., a remarkable pleurocarpous moss from Czechoslovakia. *J. Bryol.* 14: 261-267.

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