

***Spruceanthus theobromae*** (Spruce) Gradst.

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

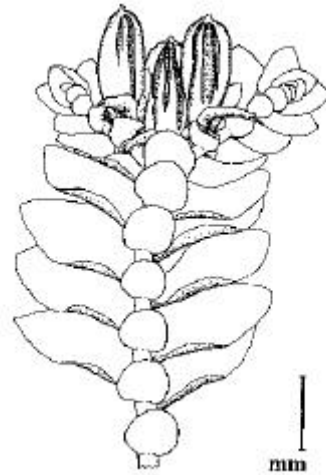
Class: Hepaticopsida

Order: Jungermanniales

Family: Lejeuneaceae

**Description and Biology:** *Spruceanthus theobromae* is a rather robust leafy liverwort which forms loose, upright or hanging tufts on the bark of rainforest trees. The stems are up to 5cm long and have forked branching. The leaves are made up of narrowly elongated cells and have very small water sacs. Small, ovate underleaves are also evident. The plants are usually fertile and sporophytes arise from perianths with many (five to eight) folds.

**Distribution and Habitat:** Known only from coastal Ecuador where it was collected four times in the Province Los Rios, between Quevedo and Guayaquil. The species has been found growing on bark of old cacao trees in periodically flooded habitats at the foot of the Andes, at about 300m a.s.l. The other species of this genus occur in Southeast Asia and Australia (Gradstein 1999b).



*Spruceanthus theobromae* (Spruce) Gradst. Illustration by Mariette Aptroot-(Teeuwen).

**History and Outlook:** *Spruceanthus theobromae* has been collected in the mid 19th century, in 1947, and in 1997 in the province of Los Rios, Ecuador. Since the 1960s most of the region has been deforested, but the forest in the area of the Hacienda Clementina, where it was again collected in 1997, is still largely intact. However it is currently growing in a critically endangered habitat. Its conservation is of considerable importance as the species is the only representative of *Spruceanthus* in the New World.

**References:** Gradstein, S.R. 1999. On the rediscovery of *Spruceanthus theobromae* (Lejeuneaceae, Hepaticae), an endangered bryophyte of cacao trees in western Ecuador. *Bryobrothera* 5: 81–86.

**Red Data sheet author:** S. Robb Gradstein.

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