

# *Symbiezidium madagascariense* Steph.

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

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Class: Hepaticae

Order: Jungermanniales

Family: Lejeuneaceae

**Description and Biology:** Plants are epiphytic and grow in small, brown-green mats on bark. Stems are 1-3 cm long and up to 2.5 mm wide, irregularly branched. Leaves are ovate with a rounded apex and a tiny, strongly inflated ventral lobule with a rudimentary tooth. Underleaves are small, suborbicular, with a rounded apex. The perianth is lateral on the stem, with a short sterile innovation, and is dorsiventrally flattened, smooth. The species is autoicous and (immature) sporophytes have been observed. Dispersal by spores is likely to occur. Vegetative reproduction is unknown.

**Distribution and Habitat:** Known from two localities: East Madagascar (near St. Marie) and the Seychelles, Mahée I. (upper Trois Frères stream). The species grows on bark in lowland rain forest.

**History and Outlook:** The genus *Symbiezium* is very common and widespread in the neotropics. In the palaeotropics, however, it is very rare and only represented by *Symbiezium madagacariense*. The latter is the most primitive member of the genus, morphologically quite different from the neotropical species, and constitutes a separate subgenus, *Eosymbizidium*. *Symbizidium madagascariense* was first collected in 1904, in coastal rain forest of northeastern Madagascar. The species has not been sighted on Madagascar since, notwithstanding intensive collecting by bryologists in recent years. One further collection has turned up from the Seychelles (Is. Mahé), in the 1960's. In view of the massive recent deforestation on Madagascar and the Seychelles, especially in the lowlands, and the threats to the remaining rain forest, Since there is virtually no rain forest left on the Seychelles and only about 10% of the original area remaining on Madagascar, the remains being heavily threatened due to population growth and other human pressures, *S. madagascariense* is considered an endangered species.

## References:

- Gradstein, S. R. and Beek, J. van. 1985. A revision of the genus *Symbiezidium* Trevis. - Beih. Nova Hedwigia 80: 221-253.
- Groombridge, B. (ed.) 1992. Global Biodiversity: Status of the Earth's Living Resources. - Chapman & Hall, London.

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