FABACEAE

NOTES ON PROSOPIS IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

When preparing the brief account of the taxonomically difficult genus *Prosopis* for the Flora of Southern Africa, 16,1: 6 (1975), little southern African material was available for study and Burkart's long-awaited monograph of the genus had not been published. Burkart died early in 1975 shortly after completing his monograph and the work was published posthumously in J. Arn. Arb. 57,3: 219-249 (1976) and in J. Arn. Arb. 57,4: 450-525 (1976). Interest in the genus in South Africa has increased significantly during the last two years owing to the rising concern about the widespread infestations and encroachment of *Prosopis* species in disturbed areas.

A study of Burkart's monograph revealed that P. chilensis (Mol.) Stuntz var. catamarcana Burkart had been recorded from South West Africa, a species which I had not included in my account in the Flora of Southern Africa. The record from South West Africa was based on three "cultivated and subspontaneous" specimens collected by "Forest Research Officer, Pretoria", numbers 8, 9 and 19 and housed in the Instituto Botanico Darwinion, San Isidro, Prov. Buenos Aires, Argentina (SI). In response to a request to the Director, Instituto Botanico. Darwinion, for the loan of the holotype of P. chilensis var. catamarcana, I received, as a donation, two rather fragmentary duplicates of two of the specimens from South West Africa cited in J. Arn. Arb. 1.c.: 497, namely, Forest Research Officer 8 and 9. Each specimen consists of leaf fragments and a few fragmentary pod valves. The label on number 9 indicates that it was collected in January 1949. Although the locality given by Burkart is South West Africa, this is not confirmed by the information on the label of either specimen so it would appear that there is some doubt concerning the precise locality of collection.

The pods of *P. chilensis* var. *catamarcana* are distinctly curved or subcircular to annular and are 1,3-2 cm wide, in contrast to those of *P. glandulosa* Torrey var. *torreyana* (Benson) Johnston which are straight or only slightly curved and 0,7-1,1 cm wide. On the basis of the pods, the two specimens of *P*.

chilensis var. catamarcana received from Instituto Botanico Darwinion are readily distinguished from fruiting specimens of P. glandulosa var. torreyana from southern Africa, but vegetatively the two species are difficult to distinguish. Both P. chilensis and P. glandulosa are polymorphic and exhibit a considerable degree of variation, particularly in vegetative characters. None of the other fruiting specimens of Prosopis from southern Africa that I have seen, including the large number of recent collections by G. B. Harding and L. Smook, has pods which match those of P. chilensis var. catamarcana. However, as P. chilensis var. catamarcana and P. glandulosa var. torreyana are difficult to distinguish vegetatively with any degree of confidence, it is quite possible that *P. chilensis* var. catamarcana is more widespread in southern Africa than is suggested by the three specimens cited by Burkart. Additional collections of fruiting specimens of Prosopis species from southern Africa are required in order to establish more accurately the distributional range of P. chilensis var. catamarcana and of the other species.

P. pubescens Benth. appears to be confined to the northern Cape Province, the largest concentrations of plants apparently occurring in the vicinity of Van Wyk's Vlei. P. glandulosa var. torreyana is not restricted to South West Africa and the Transvaal as suggested by the account of the species in the Flora of Southern Africa 1.c.: 7, but also occurs in the Cape Province. Burkart's monograph suggests that the name P. velutina Wooton was misapplied in the Flora of Southern Africa 1.c.: 7 and consequently the identity of the plants cited as *P. velutina* is uncertain and needs clarification. The material currently being referred to P. velutina is rather heterogeneous and the possibility exists that there is more than one taxon involved. It is essential that the correct taxonomic status of these specimens is resolved, particularly in view of the economic significance of the Prosopis spp. in southern Africa.

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