CRASSULACEAE

A Curious Form of Crassula natans Thunb. from the Natal Drakensberg

During a recent collecting expedition to the Loteni-Giant's Castle area of the Natal Drakensberg, the author discovered a curious aquatic *Crassula* (*Killick* 3869) common in pans at about 7500 ft (Fig. 4). At first it was thought that the plant might represent a new species: it could not be exactly matched in the National Herbarium, Pretoria, or at Kew. However, on closer examination of the plant, it was decided that it was merely a form of the extremely variable *Crassula natans* Thunb. It differs from typical *C. natans* and the known forms of the species as distinguished by Schonland in Ann. Bol. Herb. 2: 49 (1918) in that the stems are conspicuously swollen, fleshy and short-noded basally and filamentous and long-noded distally. Also, the terminal leaves are congested to form rosettes (which float on the surface of the water) and the flowers are terminal instead of being situated in the axils of the cauline leaves.

Dissection of a rosette revealed the following: the terminal leaves which are obovate and decussate have been congested through extreme abbreviation of the uppermost internodes; the flowers, though appearing terminal, are axillary with 1 or 2 flowers per leaf axil.

Two specimens in the National Herbarium from the south-western Cape approach *Killick* 3869 in growth form. *Andreae* 594 has a terminal rosette of leaves, but the stems are very much longer and scarcely swollen and fleshy at the base. *Drege* s.n. resembles *Andreae* 594, but the stems are distinctly swollen and fleshy at the base, although not as markedly as in *Killick* 3869.

The pans in which the Drakensberg plant occurs frequently dry up during winter, which may account for the fleshy nature of the basal part of the stems.

The petals of *Killick* 3869 are white, tinged with purple, the anthers are pale blue and the squamae are dark mauve. The carpels are 1-ovulate.

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