

A Rare Form of *Silene acaulis* L. (Moss Campion) from British Columbia

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While conducting an Ecological Reserves survey of Morfee Mountain in North Central British Columbia (55° 26' N., 123° 04' W) during mid-July 1971, the author noted an interesting variation of flower colour in *Silene acaulis* L. subsp. *subacaulescens* (F.N. Williams) Hult.

The flower colours of *Silene acaulis* are usually purple, pink or lavender throughout its range. The majority of the individuals of this species on Morfee Mountain conformed to the usual flower colour. However, one individual plant with pure white petals was observed to be mixed in with them. This struck me as unusual and interesting at the time and I took close-up photographs of the white individual and its more typical neighbours. One small part of the white flowered plant was collected for determination and later presented to University of British Columbia herbarium.

The specimen was collected near the British Columbia Telephone Company microwave relay station on Morfee Mountain at an elevation of about 1700 m. The site is very exposed and high velocity winds are common, which often carry pieces of loose shale that are scattered over the soil surface. Large wind-carried ice crystals frequently bombard the collection site in the spring at the time when *Silene* first comes into flower. Periglacial terrain features such as frost boils, solifluction activity, and stone rings are common both within and nearby the plant community, further indicating the harshness of the site.

Other plants growing in association with the white *Silene acaulis* included: *Artemisia arctica* (Arctic Sage), *Saxifraga tricuspidata* (Saxifrage), *Potentilla villosa* (Cinquoil), *Empetrum nigrum* (Crowberry), *Vaccinium uliginosum* (Bog Bilberry), *Sibbaldia procumbens* (Sibbaldia) and *Poa alpina* (Alpine Bluegrass).

Although the white-flowered form of *Silene acaulis* is not unknown, Hultén (1968) notes that this form is rare, thus making the find an interesting observation for both the amateur botanist and the more serious student of intraspecific variation in plants.

REFERENCES

- HULTÉN, ERIC. 1968. Flora of Alaska and Neighboring Territories. Stanford: Stanford University Press. 1008 pp.

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