

7.4. *Launaea* sect. *Cervicornes*

Launaea sect. *Cervicornes* N. Kilian, **sect. nova**

Type and only species: *Launaea cervicornis* (Boiss.) Font Quer & Rothm.

Plantae fruticosae spinescentes pulvinos hemisphaericos pumilos *Launaeae laniferae* (*L.* sect. *Microrhynchus*) similes formantes, sed ab hac sectione achenibus omnibus subhomomorphis costis principalibus quinque, laevibus vel minutissime tranverse rugosis et pappo multiradiato persistenti homomorpho radiis setaceis differentes. A *L.* sect. *Acanthosoncho* involucri phyllis exterioribus longitudine 1/3-1/2 phyllorum interiorum aequantibus, acheniis tenuibus, laevibus vel minutissime tranverse rugosis et costis secundariis distinctis carentibus differt.

The only species of this section, *Launaea cervicornis*, is endemic to the Balearic islands Mallorca and Menorca.

It resembles both *L. lanifera* of *L.* sect. *Microrhynchus*, with which it has been confused sometimes in the last century (Kilian 1988: 135-137), and species of *L.* sect. *Acanthosonchus*. Similar to *L. lanifera* it is a spinescent rosette shrublet and has outer involucre bracts rarely exceeding half the length of the inner involucre bracts. However, in contrast to *L. lanifera*, but similar to the species of *L.* sect. *Acanthosonchus*, it has homomorphic achenes and a homomorphic setaceous pappus. Its achenes nevertheless differ from the achenes of the latter section by lacking secondary ribs and the scarcely or only very minutely wrinkled pericarp surface, their shape, and by features of the pericarp anatomy. The pericarp anatomy of *L. cervicornis* is similar to species of *L.* sect. *Microrhynchus*, with small additional sclerenchymatous strands between the main and secondary strands, but the mesocarp of the inner achenes is much thinner than in the species studied from the latter section. The structure of its synflorescence is unique among the spinescent *Launaea* species because the upper terminal subulate segments always remain sterile.

Although *Launaea cervicornis* may have some sort of relationship to the species of *L.* sect. *Microrhynchus*, the existing differences indicate a rather isolated taxonomic position, hence it appears reasonable to place it in a section of its own.

I assume that its homomorphic achenes with five main ribs, the homomorphic pappus and its chromosome number of $2n = 18$ represent primitive features. Its growth form as a spinescent dwarf-cushion at the same time proves the species to have undergone some specialization and adaptation to a peculiar habitat. The small capitula may also represent a derived feature. The taxonomically as well as geographically isolated position of *L. cervicornis* together with this presumably heterobathmic constitution may well indicate a comparatively high phylogenetic age, thus qualifying the species as a palaeoendemic, perhaps even as a relictual descendent of a group closely allied to the ancestral stock of *L.* sect. *Microrhynchus*.

Launaea cervicornis

Launaea cervicornis (Boiss.) Font Quer & Rothm., Sched. Fl. Iber. Select., Cent. 1: 99. 1934 \equiv *Prenanthes cervicornis* Boiss., Voy. Bot. Espagne 2: 744. 1845 \equiv *Sonchus cervicornis* (Boiss.) Nyman, Syll. Fl. Eur.: 38. 1854-55 \equiv *Sonchus*