GENERIC IDENTITY OF PHORADENDRON RUSBYI (VISCACEAE) AND A NEW RECORD FOR ARGENTINA

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During a review of herbaria in Argentina we found a specimen of Phoradendron rusbyi, which represents the third collection of the species and a new record for the flora of Argentina. This species is a little aphyllous plant, being a member of the group of hyperparasitic mistletoes, and was found in a mixed collection, parasitizing Phoradendron bathyoryctum. A morphological description of the species is provided, and its inclusion in Phoradendron confirmed.

Keywords. Argentina; flora; mistletoes; Phoradendron; Viscaceae.

RESULTS


Plants percurrent, green, erect, up to 15 cm, monoecious. Stem compressed in the distal region...
(cuneate), internodes short, 1-4 cm; basal cataphylls absent. Leaves absent. Inflorescences lateral and terminal, with one sterile basal internode and 3-4 floriferous segments, each at least 3 cm long, clavate in fruit, each flower area with ca. 20 flowers, triseriate, the three apical staminate flowers with bilocular anthers. Fruits globose, ca. 3 mm in diameter, pearly white, pericarp smooth, petals closed in the fruiting stage.

**Distribution and habitat.** *Phoradendron rusbyi* occurs in the eastern slopes of the Andean forest. The small size of the plant makes it easy to be overlooked among the host foliage. The species occurs in the forest canopy, as several other *Phoradendron* species, making a visual recognition rather difficult.


**Observations.** *Phoradendron rusbyi* was first described as a leafy plant with a 5-nerved leaves, which were later verified by Kuijt (1994) as belonging to its host *Phoradendron crassifolium* (Pohl ex DC.) Eichl. Trelease (1916) placed *P. rusbyi* in *Dendrophthora* Eichler, but did not provide a justification for this change. *Phoradendron* and *Dendrophthora* are very similar in their general morphology and the only consistent feature that separates them is the number of anther locules: two in *Phoradendron* and one in *Dendrophthora.* The
two collections cited by Kuijt (2003), the type from Bolivia and a second collection from Peru [Woytkowski 5740b (US)], have no staminate flowers to confirm the generic identity of this taxon. Kuijt (2003), notwithstanding the absence of basal cataphylls, kept the species in the genus Phoradendron. In the Argentinean material it was possible to verify three staminate flowers on the apical position of floriferous internodes (Fig. 1B) of the young inflorescences of *P. rusbyi*. The bilocular anthers confirmed the placement of the species in the genus Phoradendron.

According to Kuijt (2003), *P. rusbyi* is a member of the *P. dipterum* alliance that includes the leafy *P. dipterum* and four aphyllous species (*P. ilisiorum, P. aequatoris, P. fasciculatum* and *P. falcatum*), all hyperparasitic plants with triseriate inflorescences. All species share the formation of multiple shoots from a basal cushion, as does *P. rusbyi* (Fig. 1A).

The Argentinean specimen differs from the other two existing specimens by the larger number of flowers and by the clavate segments in fruiting plants. We believe this is a variation within the species, dependent on the degree of fruit maturation. *Phoradendron dipterum* also shows this variation, showing clavate segments when the fruits ripen sequentially (from the apex to the base of the segment) or non-clavate segments when the ripening of fruits is temporally irregular.

Examined material


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**BIBLIOGRAPHY**


