

# Conservation News

## Rediscovery of *Anthemis stiparum* subsp. *sabulicola* in Algeria after 44 years

*Anthemis stiparum* subsp. *sabulicola* (Pomel) Oberpr., of the family Asteraceae, is an annual plant endemic to Saharan Algeria (there is also an unverified record in Morocco). It was first described by Pomel in 1874. It belongs to the *Anthemis stiparum* Pomel complex of North Africa. Subspecies *sabulicola* is distinguished from subspecies *intermedia* and *stiparum* by its dense indumentum and radiating flowers with elliptical to obovate limbs 4.5–7(–8.5) cm long. Its distribution in Algeria is limited to the northern Sahara, in the regions of Aïn Sefra, Béchar, Brézina, El Goléa, Ghardaïa, Laghouat, Metlili and Ouargla, but it has not been recorded since 1981 (I obtained this information from the Récolnat database).


In February 2025, on the pre-Saharan steppes that extend to the south of the western Saharan Atlas, south of the village of Sidi Brahim in the Daira of Moghrar, Wilaya Naâma, I observed a tomentose Asteraceae with white ligules that I identified as *A. stiparum* subsp. *sabulicola*. There have been no previous botanical surveys in this area, and this is the first record of the species in 44 years. This spring-flowering therophyte (known locally in Arabic as *segaat larnab*) settles on superficially sandy daysas, contributing to the formation of seasonal vegetation called *acheb* by the local people, and much appreciated by pastoralists. This vegetation only fully develops after sufficient rainfall and with protection of these overexploited rangelands. After consulting with the local people, I realized that the maintenance of this vegetation is a result of a local prohibition of grazing, endorsed in particular by the mayor of Moghrar. This initiative needs to be encouraged, to help this fragile ecosystem become more resilient and to combat desertification.

Further botanical surveys are required in this area, to facilitate assessment of *A. stiparum* subsp. *sabulicola* for the IUCN Red List and to support official protection of the area.



Habit and flower of *Anthemis stiparum* subsp. *sabulicola* (Pomel) Oberpr. Photo: Belkacem Gordo.

In addition, this endemic subspecies needs to be included on the list of protected non-cultivated plant species (Executive Decree No. 12-03 of 4 January 2012) in Algeria.

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