



Discovery of a new plant species in Maharashtra

Conservationists from BNHS, Sathaye College, and the University of Camerino together discover a new plant species in the Western Ghats

Mumbai, October 27: A team of conservationists from *BNHS, Sathaye College, and the University of Camerino* have discovered a new species of plant, *Echinops sahyadricus*, from northern Western Ghats. A paper on the discovery has been published in the international journal *Nordic Journal of Botany*. The team discovered the species during a field survey as part of the project 'Assessing the Endemic Biodiversity of the High Elevational Plateaus of Northern Western Ghats', which mainly focuses on the endemic biodiversity of the plateaus of the northern Western Ghats. The project was led by Harshal Bhosale, BNHS Conservation Officer, and the team includes Sushant More as the Lead Botanist from Sathaye College, Mumbai and Researcher Fabio Conti from the University of Camerino, Italy. The project was funded by Shripad Halbe of the Brihad Bharatiya Samaj, Mumbai.

So far, the team has conducted multiple expeditions in the states of Gujarat, Maharashtra and Karnataka in India as part of the project fieldwork. The team members came across the population of this species in August 2019, and a close examination revealed that it was new and endemic to northern Western Ghats. The new species is distinct from the related *E. echinatus* by its adaxially glabrous to sparsely elgandular hairy leaf surfaces, larger non-cornigerous synflorescences up to 9 cm in diameter, and numerous (19–24) glabrous phyllaries up to 27 mm long. *Echinops sahyadricus* is distributed in northern Western Ghats from Salher (Nashik district) in the north to Kolhapur in the south. It is endemic to the state of Maharashtra and the species grows on open mountain slopes from 800 to 1400 m.a.s.l.

According to IUCN (2019), *Echinops sahyadricus* should be categorized as 'Least Concern' (LC) for now. The population is not declining at present, and there are no indications of threats or extreme fluctuations. However, future development projects like road widening in the Ghats and repairs around the forts could affect the species.

You can read the abstract of the paper: <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/njb.02860>

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