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WESTERN AUSTRALIAN
Herbarium



DEPARTMENT OF
Conservation
AND LAND MANAGEMENT
Conserving the nature of WA

A first report of the exotic *Leptochloa panicea* subsp. *brachiata* (Poaceae) for Western Australia

The genus *Leptochloa* P. Beauv. (Poaceae) is represented by nine species in Australia (Sharp and Simon 2002). Three of these include subspecies, bringing the total number of taxa in Australia to fourteen. I report here the first confirmed occurrence in Western Australia of *Leptochloa panicea* (Retz.) Ohwi subsp. *brachiata* (Steud.) N. Snow, a non-native taxon of neotropical origin. The species has various common names, including red sprangletop, mucronate sprangletop, as well as several variations in Spanish (Snow 1997).

This taxon is probably the most abundant member of the genus in the New World tropics and warm temperate zones, if the total number of herbarium specimens is an accurate reflection of its overall abundance. Apart from *L. fusca* (L.) Kunth subsp. *fascicularis* (Lam.) N. Snow and subsp. *uninervia* (J. Presl) N. Snow, it has the widest distribution of the genus in the neotropics. Previously for Australia, *L. panicea* subsp. *brachiata* has only been reported from several occurrences in or near coastal Queensland (Sharp and Simon 2002).

Many members of *Leptochloa* thrive in disturbed, seasonally moist habitats, such as along the receding margins of reservoirs, on mesic or irrigated cultivated and livestock lands, along seasonal watercourses (Snow & Peterson 1992) or floodplains, and along roadways. This first report is from a specimen along the banks of Lake Kununurra. The specimen seen at GREE is atypical in its having only a very few pilose hairs on the leaf sheaths, whereas typical members of the species and subspecies typically have numerous (although typically not abundant) pilose hairs.

Leptochloa panicea subsp. *brachiata* has the potential to become a widespread weed in Australia since virtually any part of the continent under 1,000 metres elevation combining seasonal moisture and a disturbed soil surface represents potential habitat. Given the cooler climatic regime of Tasmania, it is less likely it would become established there. This taxon, which recently also has been known by the names *Leptochloa mucronata* (Lam.) P. Beauv. and *L. filiformis* (Michx.) Kunth (Snow and Davidse 1993; Snow 1998), can be found on checklists on the internet of species considered to be weedy threats to the viticulture industry of WA (e.g. <http://agspsrv34.agric.wa.gov.au/programs/app/industry/links/pdf/WTST.pdf>.) Another neotropical member of the genus, *L. fusca* subsp. *uninervia*, is also considered a threat to the vineyards in WA and becoming increasingly widespread in Australia (Snow and Simon 1999; Sharp and Simon 2002).

Specimen cited: WESTERN AUSTRALIA: Packsaddle Plain on the bank of Lake Kununurra, 7.3 km from Kununurra on a bearing of 182 degrees, E. Kimberley, 90°43'59"S, 128°44'17"E, 18 Apr 2000, A. A. Mitchell 6158 (BO, BRI, GREE!, PERTH).

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