

Sorbus pseudomeinichii –

Evolution, extinction and an exciting discovery on the Isle of Arran

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Evolution of *Sorbus pseudomeinichii* Ashley Robertson



Sorbus aucuparia L.

X



Sorbus rupicola (Syme) Hedl.



Sorbus aucuparia

X



Sorbus arranensis Hedl.

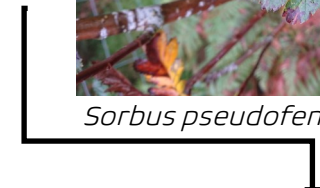


Sorbus aucuparia

X



Sorbus pseudofennica E. F. Warb



A leaf from the newly discovered plant of *Sorbus pseudomeinichii*



Sorbus pseudomeinichii

Timeline of discovery for *Sorbus pseudomeinichii*

1901

Johan Hedlund publishes details of two new *Sorbus* species: *S. meinichii* from Norway and *S. arranensis* from Arran, Scotland.

1957

Edmund Warburg describes a second species unique to Arran, *Sorbus pseudofennica*; a backcross between *S. aucuparia* and *S. arranensis*

1949

Donald McVean collected a *Sorbus* in Glen Catacol, it is misidentified as *S. arranensis*.

1996

Phil Lusby saw McVean's specimen and suggests it is a hybrid between *S. aucuparia* and *S. pseudofennica*.

2000

Ashley Robertson re-finds tree and two others like it and proves the specimens, through genetic research, to be a back cross between *S. aucuparia* and *S. pseudofennica*.

2004

Searches fail to re-find the two additional trees; one had been killed in a flood and the other presumed to be eaten by deer.

2006

Ashley Robertson publishes *Sorbus pseudomeinichii* as a new species naming it for its resemblance to Hedlund's *S. meinichii* it instantly becomes one of the rarest trees in the world.

2017

Sorbus pseudomeinichii

published as Critically Endangered on the IUCN Red List

(www.iucnredlist.org/species/79749367/79749371)

2020 – A special find

On the 15th September, whilst visiting Arran to see its endemic *Sorbus* microspecies, two lone, unprotected and heavily grazed *Sorbus* trees were observed by us near the top of the Catacol burn. One was a rowan (*S. aucuparia*) but the other had larger terminal leaflets, some of which had lobes resembling fused leaflets, and just four to five (sometimes six) pairs of lateral leaflets across the majority of its remaining autumnal foliage. After consulting with *Sorbus* experts (Dr Tim Rich and Dr Ashley Robertson), it was identified as *S. pseudomeinichii* with Dr. Robertson confirming this as a new location for the taxa, rather than the rediscovery of one of the two previously known plants that had been lost.

More information will be published in during 2021 or you can read a blog about the discovery at <https://globaltrees.org/news-blog/evolution-and-discovery-on-the-isle-of-arran/>