

The threatened populations of *Clematis alpina* in Switzerland

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Clematis alpina (L.) Mill is a small arborescent liana of the Ranunculaceae family. The species has a scattered distribution between the French Alps and north-eastern Asia. Three subspecies are recognized. *C. alpina* subsp. *alpina* grows in the Alps, the Carpaths, the Balkan Peninsula and up to Poland and Ukraine. In Switzerland, *C. alpina* is mostly present in Engadin (eastern part of Grisons) where it grows up to 2350 m a.s.l. in *Larix decidua* or *Pinus cembra* forests. Several small relictual populations are found in western Switzerland such as in the Gasterntal in the Alps near Kandersteg (BE) or between Charmey and Boltigen in the Prealps (BE, FR). The species is protected entirely in the cantons of Tessin, Bern and Fribourg.

We present here an outline and preliminary results of a project done to study *C. alpina* in Switzerland and more precisely the situation of the threatened stands within the canton of Fribourg. The project aimed at making an inventory of the extant stations of *C. alpina* in the canton of Fribourg, assessing the ecological niche of the species throughout Switzerland and characterizing the genetic diversity at a population level in Switzerland and throughout Europe.