



**Common Name:** BIG-FRUITED BUCKTHORN

**Scientific Name:** *Sideroxylon macrocarpum* (Nuttall) J.R. Allison

**Other Commonly Used Names:** Ohoopee bumelia, Ohoopee bully

**Previously Used Scientific Names:** *Bumelia macrocarpa* Nuttall, *Bumelia lanuginosa* var. *macrocarpa* (Nuttall) A. Gray

**Family:** Sapotaceae (sapodilla)

**Rarity Ranks:** G3Q/S2

**State Legal Status:** Rare

**Federal Legal Status:** none

**Federal Wetland Status:** none

**Description:** Low **shrub** less than 20 inches (50 cm) tall (rarely up to 3 feet – 1 meter – tall), with thorny aboveground stems rising from thick, woody underground stems. **Stems** hairy only when young, hairless by early summer. **Leaves** usually  $\frac{3}{4}$  - 1  $\frac{1}{2}$  inches (1 - 4 cm) long, with

rounded tips and tapering bases, leathery; lower surface with a sparse cover of straight, blond or rusty hairs; leaves alternate on long stems and clustered on short shoots. **Flower clusters** on previous year's twigs. **Flowers** usually about 1/8 inch (3 - 4 mm) long, white, usually with 5 petals. Mature **fruit** about 3/4 inch (1 cm) long, black, oval or round, with one large seed.

**Similar Species:** Woolly buckthorn (*Sideroxylon lanuginosum*) is a tall shrub with shoots hairy throughout the first year, and the lower surfaces of leaves densely covered with rust-colored hairs; it occurs in dry to moist woodlands. Smooth buckthorn (*S. reclinatum*) is a shrub up to 15 feet (4 meters) tall; the lower surfaces of its young leaves have short, pale hairs which quickly slough off as leaves mature; its fruit is less than 3/8 inch (1 cm) long.

**Related Rare Species:** See Thorne's buckthorn (*Sideroxylon thornei*) and silver buckthorn (*S. alachuense*) on this website.

**Habitat:** Sandy, open, well-drained pine-oak woodlands, often with long-leaf pine and a variety of oak species (sand post, sand laurel, bluejack, turkey, and blackjack oaks).

**Life History:** Big-fruited buckthorn reproduces sexually as well as vegetatively by the spread of underground stems, often forming large colonies. It flowers in late spring and again in September; the flowers are mildly fragrant and attract a variety of insect pollinators. Although pollination studies have not been conducted for this species, most buckthorns are capable of both cross- and self-pollination. The large fruit is fleshy and sweet, making it attractive to animals, which disperse the seeds. Big-fruited buckthorn is tardily deciduous, dropping its leaves in late winter and then quickly leafing out again.

**Survey Recommendations:** Flowers late May–June and in September, but plants are recognizable throughout the growing season.

**Range:** Endemic to approximately 13 counties in southeast Georgia.

**Threats:** Conversion of habitat to pine plantations, pastures, and developments. Fire suppression.

**Georgia Conservation Status:** Approximately 40 populations are known, all but 5 on private lands or in highway rights-of-way. This species is sold by nurseries as Ohoopee bumelia.

**Conservation and Management Recommendations:** Apply prescribed fire every 3-7 years, preferably during the growing season. Avoid converting habitat to pine plantations or developments.

#### **Selected References:**

Allison, J.R. 2006. Big-fruited buckthorn, *Sideroxylon macrocarpum* (Sapotaceae), a long-forgotten Georgia endemic. *Sida* 22(1): 243-265.

Chafin, L.G. 2007. Field guide to the rare plants of Georgia. State Botanical Garden of Georgia and University of Georgia Press, Athens.



Godfrey, R.K. 1988. Trees, shrubs, and woody vines of northern Florida and adjacent Georgia and Alabama. University of Georgia Press, Athens.

Huegel, C. 1992. *Bumelias*. The Palmetto 12(3): 1 - 3.  
<http://www.fnps.org/palmetto/v12i3p6hugel.pdf>

NatureServe. 2008. NatureServe Explorer. Arlington, Virginia.  
<http://www.natureserve.org/explorer>

Weakley, A.S. 2008. Flora of the Carolinas, Virginia, Georgia, northern Florida, and surrounding areas. University of North Carolina Herbarium, Chapel Hill.  
<http://www.herbarium.unc.edu/flora.htm>

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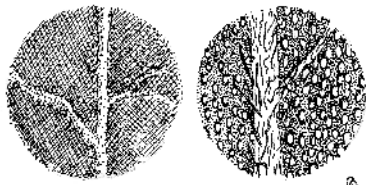
**Date Compiled or Updated:**

L. Chafin, Aug. 2008: original account

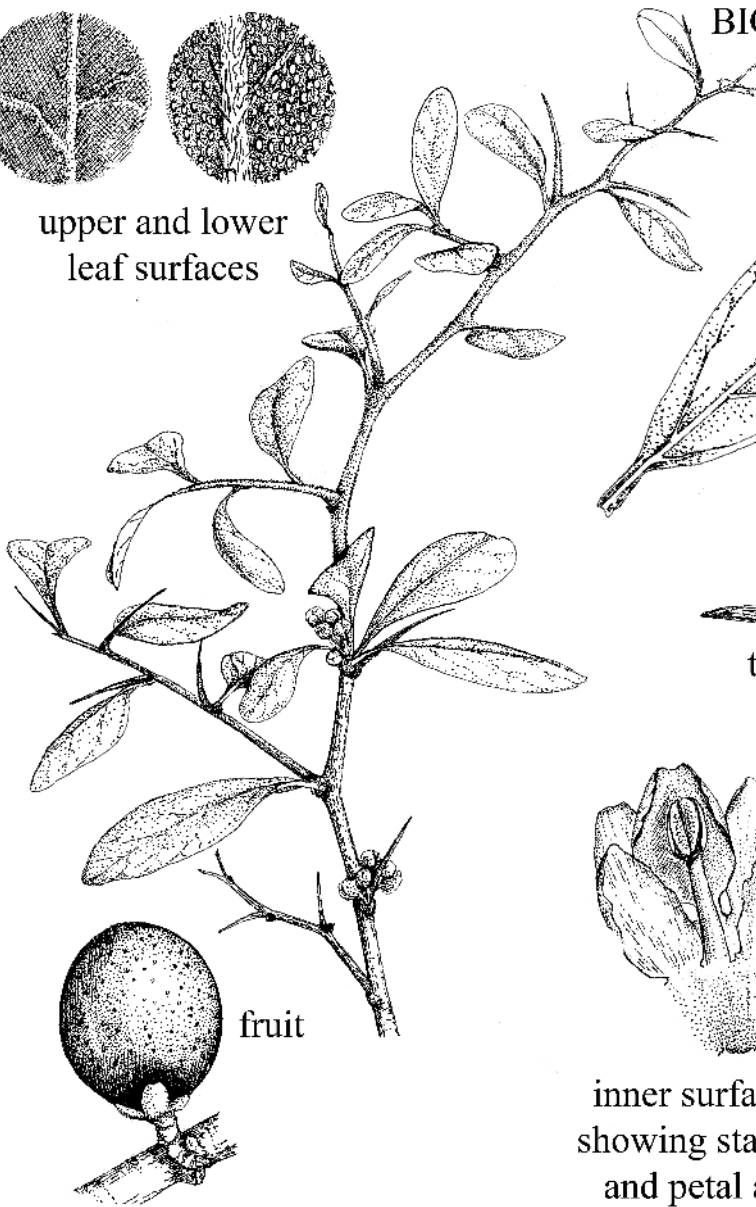
K. Owers, Feb. 2010: added pictures



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*Sideroxylon macrocarpum*



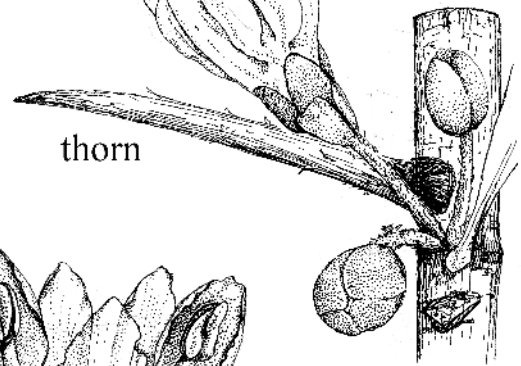
upper and lower  
leaf surfaces



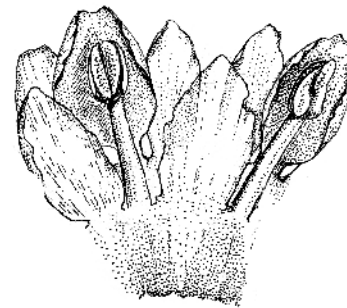
fruit



flower



thorn



inner surface of flower  
showing stamens, petals,  
and petal appendages

J.C. Putnam H.



