

## COKER'S BEACH CREEPER

*Ernodea cokeri* Britt. ex Coker

**Synonyms:** none

**Family:** Rubiaceae (coffee)

**FNAI Ranks:** G4Q/S1

**Legal Status:** US-none; FL-Endangered



Gil Nelson

**Field Description:** Prostrate **shrub** with slender, finely hairy, trailing **stems**. **Leaves** 1.5 - 4.1 cm long, clustered, opposite, simple, lacking leafstalks, narrow, linear, slightly curving, pointed, leathery and shiny, entire or toothed, with 1 main vein and prominent sheaths. **Flowers** small, orange, red, or pink, tubular with 4 strongly curling lobes, stamens and pistil extending beyond petals. **Fruits** oval, orange-yellow, with 4 persistent sepals.

**Similar Species:** Beach creeper (*Ernodea littoralis*) leaves are wider and have 3 or more prominent veins; flowers are white, pink, or yellow; it grows on dunes. Some species of false buttonweed (*Spermacoce* spp.) have similar leaves but are not woody. Also see pride-of-Big-Pine (*Strumpfia maritima*), a rare species included in this guide.

**Related Rare Species:** See in this guide: Bahama wild coffee (*Psychotria ligustrifolia*), princewood (*Exostema caribaeum*), and small-flowered lilythorn (*Catesbaea parviflora*).

**Habitat:** Disturbed hammocks and pine rocklands.

## Coker's beach creeper

*Ernodea cokeri*

**Best Survey Season:** Flowers all year, primarily December - February; leaves are distinctive all year.

**Range-wide Distribution:** FL, West Indies, Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras.

**Conservation Status:** Only 3 populations are known in FL, all on conservation areas, in Dade County and Monroe County Keys (National Key Deer Refuge).

**Protection and Management:** Purchase pine rocklands and manage for conservation. Use fire to create a mosaic of habitats. Control exotic species.

**References:** Coile 2000, Correll and Correll 1982, IRC 1999, Negron-Ortiz and Hickey 1996, Wunderlin 1998, Wunderlin and Hansen 2000a.

