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Rennellia Korth. (Rubiaceae): A New Generic Record for India from Great Nicobar Island

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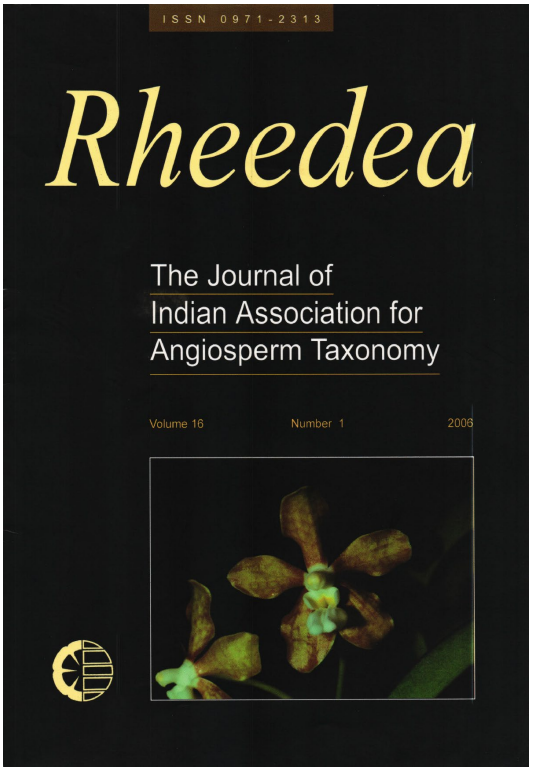

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Abstract

Rennellia speciosa (Wallich ex Kurz) Hook. f. is reported for the first time from Great Nicobar Island. A detailed description, illustration and relevant notes are provided.

Keywords: *Rennellia*, Generic record, Great Nicobar Island, Indian flora

Introduction

The genus *Rennellia* Korth. is allied to *Gentingia* Johansson & Wong, *Motleyia* Johansson and *Prismatomeris* Thwaites in the tribe Morindeae (Rubioideae) of Rubiaceae and is represented by four species in the tropical evergreen forests of West Malaysia, peninsular Thailand and Tenasserim District of Myanmar (Johansson, 1989).

Rennellia speciosa (Wallich ex Kurz) Hook. f. is so far known to occur in Peninsular Myanmar, Peninsular Thailand and Peninsular Malaysia. Chamchumroon and Puff (2003) recorded this species recently from Ko Chang island of Thailand. The present collection from the Great Nicobar island constitutes a new generic record for Indian flora. A detailed description and illustrations are provided.

Rennellia speciosa (Wallich ex Kurz) Hook. f., Fl. Brit. India 3:158. 1880. Ridley, Fl. Malay Pen. 2: 120. 1923. *Morinda speciosa* (Wallich Cat. 1847, no. 8436, *nom. nud.*) ex Kurz For. Fl. 2: 62.1877. **Fig. 1**

Scandent shrubs, upto 20 m high; young branches quadrangular, glabrous. *Leaves* simple, opposite, decussate, usually obovate or elliptic, sometimes ovate or narrowly elliptic; petiole 7-12 mm long, glabrous; lamina 5-8 x 2-3 cm, glabrous on both surfaces, acute to acuminate at apex, attenuate at base, entire along margin, dark green above, pale beneath, brownish when dry; nerves inconspicuous, 9-13 pairs; stipule 3-5 mm long, glabrous, connately sheathing the stem and branches; stipular lobes interpetiolar. *Flowers* in terminal panicles with 4-6 peduncled receptacles; capitula usually 3 flowered, rarely 2 flowered; fruiting peduncle *c.* 2 cm long; fruiting pedicel 1.2-1.6 cm long, glabrous. *Fruits* globose to sub-globose, 1.5-2 cm across, fleshy, glabrous, purplish blacke with 1-4 pyrenes; seeds trigonous, laterally compressed, 1 to a few, 5-6 x 3 mm, dark brown, glabrous.

Fruiting: May (Flowers not seen).

Specimens Examined: INDIA, **Great Nicobar Island,** Nevydera Forest, 15.5.2003, *Shimpale 551* (CEMDE, University of Delhi); *Shimpale 552* (K).

Distribution: India (Great Nicobar Island), Peninsular Myanmar, Peninsular Thailand and Peninsular Malaysia.

Note: Johansson (1989) described *Rennellia speciosa* as a tree or a shrub reaching upto 7 meter in height. However, in Great Nicobar we observed this species as a liana reaching up to 20 meter in length. Hooker (1880) has described it as a stout evergreen climbing shrub. This species is of very rare occurrence in Great Nicobar Island. We could spot out only a single plant in Nevydera forest during our four month long field exploration in Great Nicobar Island.

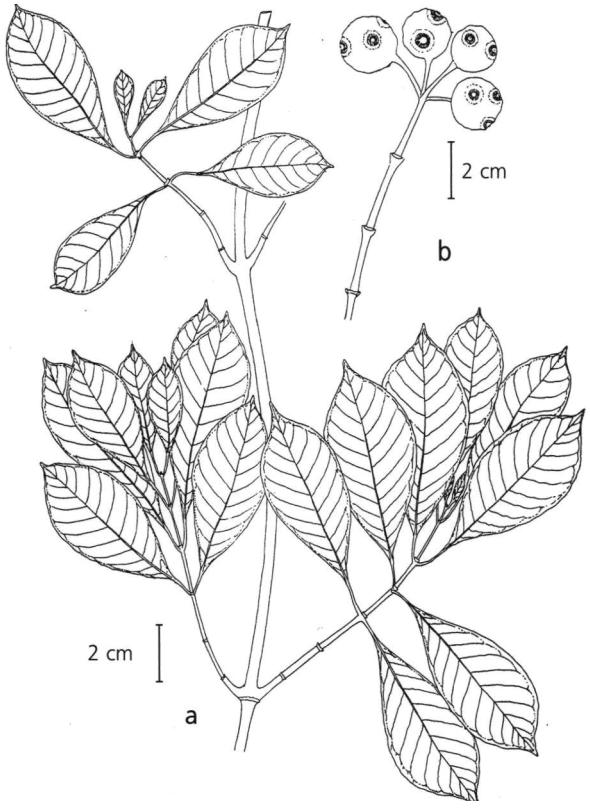

Figure 1. *Rennellia speciosa* (Wallich ex Kurz) Hook. f.- a. Twig; b. Fruits.

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