

Porpax fibuliformis (Orchidaceae) – An addition to the flora of Andaman & Nicobar Islands, India

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Abstract: *Porpax fibuliformis* (King & Pantl.) King & Pantl. (Orchidaceae) is first reported from Andaman & Nicobar Islands, India. A brief description with photoplates is provided for easy identification.

Keywords: South Andaman Island, new distributional report, epiphytic orchid.

Introduction

The genus *Porpax* Lindl. comprises a group of small epiphytic orchids characterized by discoid pseudobulbs and belongs to the subfamily *Epidendroideae* (Schuitman, 2016). It is represented by c. 57 species distributed in Tropical Africa, Tropical and Subtropical Asia to South-West Pacific (POWO, 2026). Six species have been recorded from India (Singh *et al.*, 2020; Sarkar *et al.*, 2025) in which two are reported from Andaman & Nicobar Islands (Pandey & Diwakar, 2008; Karthigeyan *et al.*, 2014; Murugan *et al.*, 2016; Sarkar *et al.*, 2025). Both the species, viz., *P. elwesii* (Rchb.f.) Rolfe and *P. jerdoniana* (Wight) Rolfe are confined to Andaman Islands. *Porpax meirax* (C.S.P. Parish & Rchb.f.) King & Pantl. reported from India earlier based on specimen from Andaman and Nicobar Islands has been excluded from Orchid Flora of India recently (Sarkar *et al.*, 2025).

During floristic explorations in Andaman group of Islands, specimens of *Porpax* collected from South Andaman Island were critically examined and identified as *Porpax fibuliformis* (King &

Pantl.) King & Pantl. A thorough scrutiny of literature (Sinha, 1999; Pandey & Diwakar, 2008; Karthigeyan *et al.*, 2014; Murugan *et al.*, 2016; Misra, 2019; Singh *et al.*, 2020) revealed that this species was hitherto not recorded from Andaman & Nicobar Islands. Hence, in the present treatment the species is reported as a new addition to the orchid flora of Andaman & Nicobar Islands. A brief description along with a photoplate is provided to facilitate easy recognition of this species.

Taxonomic Treatment

Porpax fibuliformis (King & Pantl.) King & Pantl., Ann. Roy. Bot. Gard., Calcutta 8: 114, t.157. 1898; N. Pearce & P.J. Cribb, Orch. Bhutan: 388. 2002. *Eria fibuliformis* King & Pantl., J. Asiat. Soc. Bengal, Pt. 2, Nat. Hist. 64(2): 336. 1895 [1896]. *Lectotype* (designated by Sarkar *et al.*, 2025): INDIA, **Sikkim**, Sevoke (presently at West Bengal), October 1893, *Pantling* 278 (CAL [CAL0000000835!]).

Porpax chapramariensis R. Chowdhury & M. Chowdhury, Indian J. Pl. Sci. 13: 115. 2024. *Type*: INDIA, **West Bengal**, Jalpaiguri District, Chapramari Wildlife Sanctuary, road side areas, 26.933758° N, 88.868847° E; 26.926943° N, 88.871819° E, 114 ± 50 m a.s.l., 08.03.2023, Chowdhury & Chowdhury 0342 (*holo* NBU; *iso* NBU).

Fig. 1

Epiphytic herbs, upto 2.5 cm high forming mats on substratum. Roots filiform, from the base of pseudobulbs. Pseudobulbs button-like, compressed, 0.7–1.2 × 0.5–1.0 cm, closely placed,

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enveloped by a membranous, reticulate sheath. Leaves 2, oblanceolate to elliptic, 2.5–3.5 × 1.0–1.02 cm, entire to minutely ciliate, acute to sub-acute, many-veined, sessile. Floral bracts ovate, 3–4 mm long, acute, glabrous. Flowers 1 or 2, rarely 3, from between the paired leaves, at base enclosed by 2 overlapping sheathing bracts. Sheathing bracts oblong-ovate, acute, 4–5 mm long, hirsute to pubescent, tubular, opening only at the mouth, reddish brown. Pedicel with ovary 2.0–2.3 mm long, obscurely ribbed, sparsely pubescent. Sepals hispid externally, beaked, gibbous at base; dorsal sepal elliptic, 4.0–4.5 × 1.8–2.0 mm forming a hood along with the petals, entire, acute, more or less free from lateral sepals; lateral sepals oblanceolate, 3.5–4.0 × 1.5–1.8 mm, falcate, entire, acute, connate for most of their length, with free apices. Petals oblong-lanceolate, 2–2.5 × c. 0.75 mm, subacute.

Lip oblong, 2–2.5 mm long, 3-lobed, clawed at base; lateral lobes broad, rounded, distal margins shortly dentate to fimbriate; apical lobe oblong-lanceolate, slightly dentate to erose margins; disc with a rounded callus at base on the claw. Column 1.0–1.2 mm long, glabrous; foot 2–2.2 mm long. Rostellum largely ovate. Anthers 2-celled, terminal, incumbent; anther cap c. 0.4 × 0.3 mm, ovate with erose apex with slightly high appendage. Pollinia 8, elliptic-obovate in 2 groups of 4 each, similar, c. 0.3 × 0.2 mm, yellow. Capsules globose, small.

Flowering & Fruiting: Flowering from June to July and fruiting in August.

Habitat: A rare epiphytic orchid found growing on moss covered tree trunks in dense evergreen and semi evergreen forests at an elevation of about 300 m.

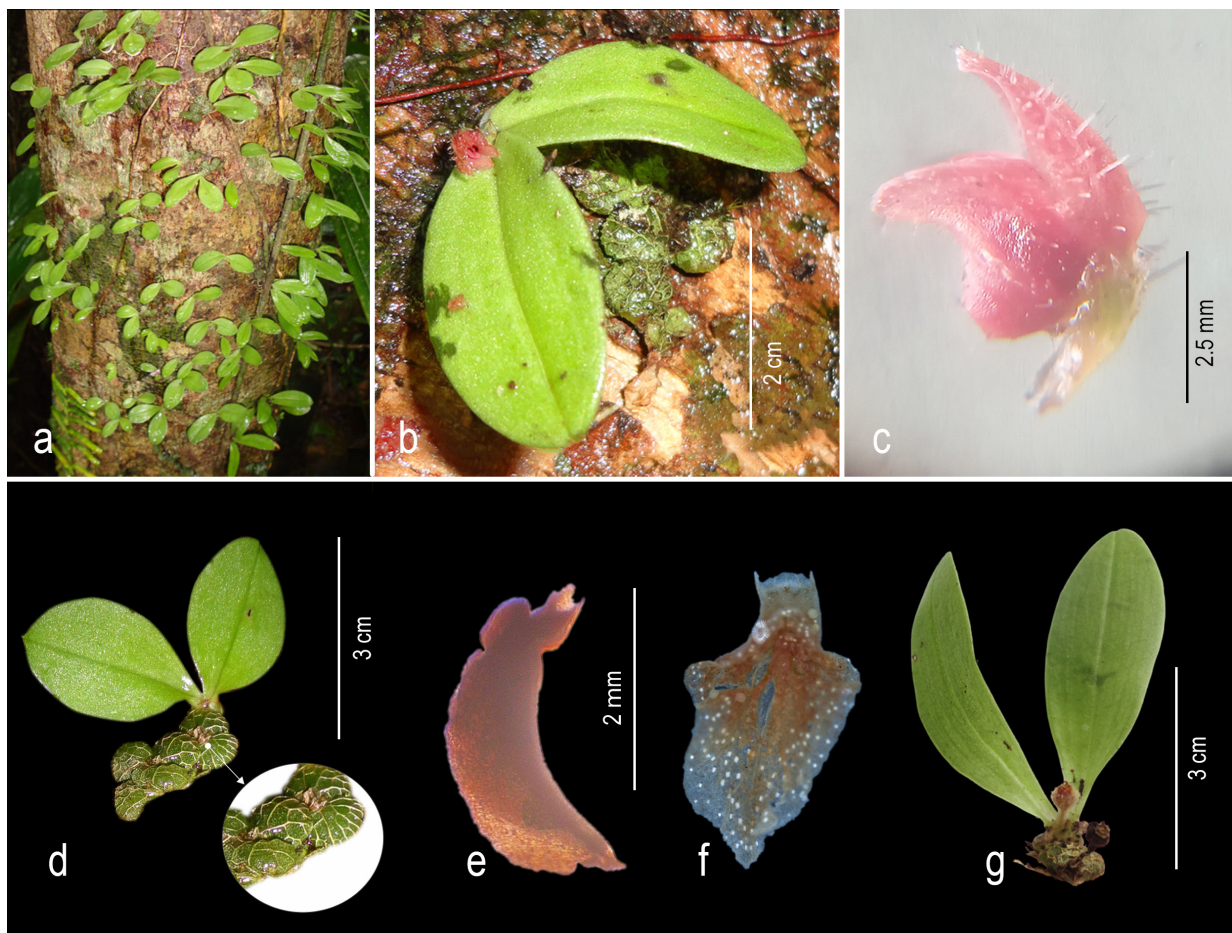


Fig. 1. *Porpax fibuliformis* (King & Pantl.) King & Pantl.: **a.** Habit; **b.** A single flowering plant. **c.** Flower—enlarged view; **d.** Pseudobulbs; **e.** Lip—side view; **f.** Lip—straightened; **g.** A plant with fruits (All from Joju P. Alappatt 556).

Distribution: India (Andaman & Nicobar Islands, Mizoram, Sikkim, West Bengal) and Laos.

Specimen examined: INDIA, **Andaman & Nicobar Islands**, South Andaman Island, Mt. Harriet, 08.07.2013, Joju P. Alappatt 556 (PBL).

Notes: *Porpax fibuliformis* is closely related to *P. ustulata* Rolfe (known from China to Indo-China), with the lip morphology serving as the primary distinguishing character between the two species. In typical *P. fibuliformis*, the lip is distinctly three-lobed possessing a well-developed apical lobe, and the margins of both the lateral and apical lobes are prominently fimbriate or laciniate. In contrast, *P. ustulata* lacks a distinct apical lobe, and the lip margins are either entire or only weakly fimbriate/laciniate.

However, examination of numerous specimens of both taxa reveals the presence of intermediate forms exhibiting a combination of these diagnostic characters, making species delimitation difficult. Furthermore, specimens previously identified as *P. fibuliformis* from Thailand have recently been reassigned to *P. ustulata* in the *e-Flora of Thailand* (Pederson *et al.*, 2022).

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