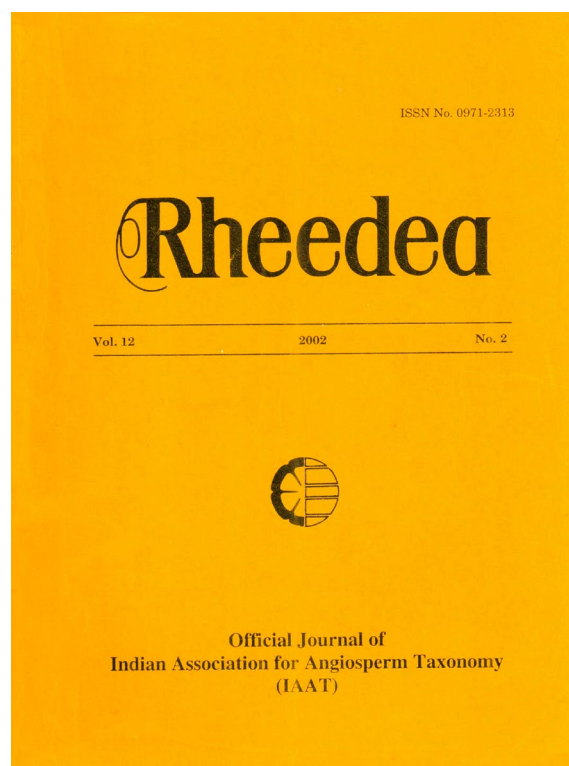




Rediscovery of *Ardisia blatteri* Gamble (Myrsinaceae) an endemic and critically endangered species from the Kalakkad - Mundanthurai Tiger Reserve in India

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How to cite:

Viswanathan M.B., Manikandan U. & A.C. Tangavelou 2002. Rediscovery of *Ardisia blatteri* Gamble (Myrsinaceae) an endemic and critically endangered species from the Kalakkad - Mundanthurai Tiger Reserve in India. *Rheedeia* 12(2): 193-196.

<https://dx.doi.org/10.22244/rheedeia.2002.12.02.16>

Published in print: 31.12.2002

Published Online: 01.01.2022

**Rediscovery of *Ardisia blatteri* Gamble
(Myrsinaceae) an endemic and critically endangered
species from the Kalakkad - Mundanthurai Tiger
Reserve in India**

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Abstract

Ardisia blatteri Gamble, an endemic and critically endangered species, is rediscovered after a lapse of about 75 years from the Kalakkad - Mundanthurai Tiger Reserve of Tirunelveli district, Tamil Nadu, India. Description, illustration and other relevant details are provided to facilitate identification and conservation of the species.

INTRODUCTION

Gamble (1921) described *Ardisia blatteri* based on a collection by Bourdillon from Travancore of Kerala in 1887. While describing the taxon, Gamble (1921) also cited Blatter & Hallberg collection from High Wavy Mountain of Madurai district in Tamil Nadu. In 1925, Jacob collected *Ardisia blatteri* from the latter locality. Nayar (1996) considered this species as critically endangered and are at the verge of extinction. After a lapse of about 75 years this species is rediscovered from the Kalakkad - Mundanthurai Tiger Reserve of Tirunelveli district of Tamil Nadu, India. The distribution interconnects the gap found between Madurai district and Travancore. Considering its endemicity and rarity, a detailed description with illustration and other relevant details are provided to help its identification and conservation.

Ardisia blatteri Gamble, Kew Bull. 1921: 121.1921 & Fl. Pres. Madras 755. 1928 (2:531.1957, repr. ed.) (Fig. 1).

Trees, up to 5 m high; branchlets ashy grey, subterete, faintly striate, minutely rusty when young, glabrous when mature; leaf scars persistent, 2-3 mm across; internodes 3.5-11.5 x 0.75-2.5 mm. Leaves alternate, elliptic-lanceolate, oblanceolate, 1.1-12 x 0.4-4.5 cm, brown when dry, coriaceous, gland-dotted, cuneate at base, crenate-dentate at margin, acuminate at apex; midrib canaliculate above, strongly raised beneath, glabrous; lateral nerves 13-22 pairs,

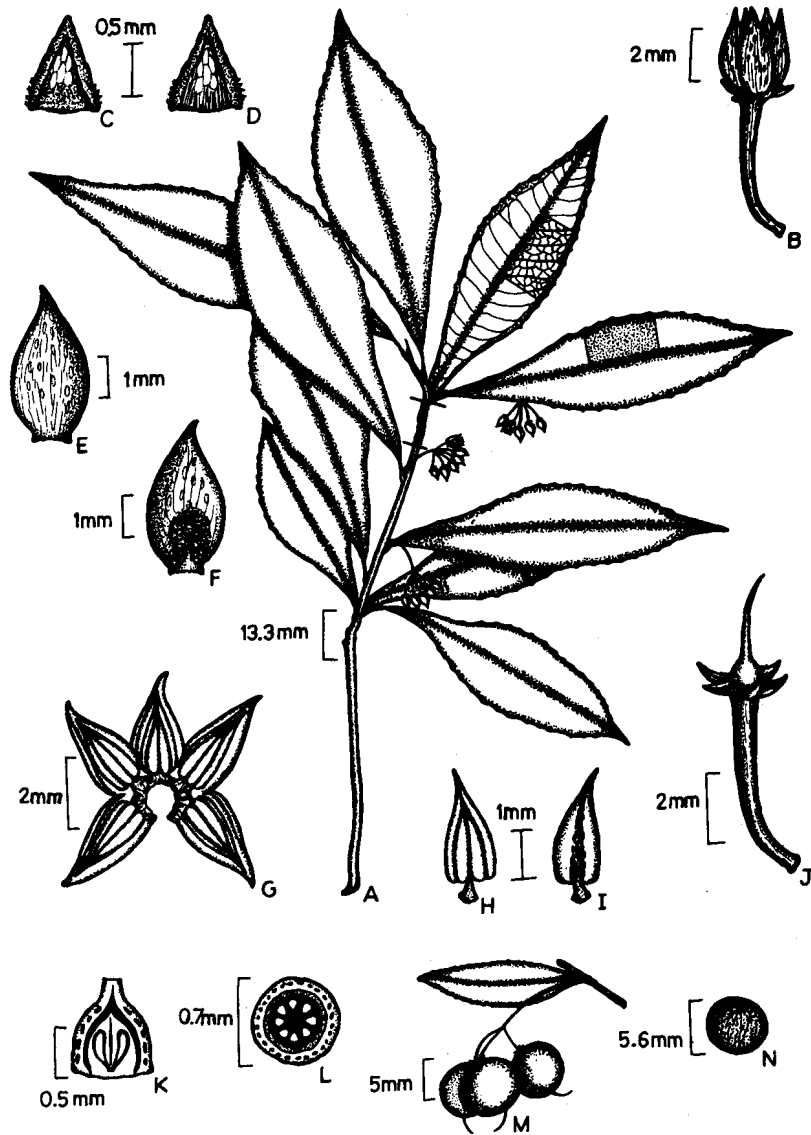
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Fig. 1. *Ardisia blatteri* Gamble: A. Flowering twig; B. Flower; C. Sepal - dorsal view; D. Sepal - ventral view; E. Petal - dorsal view; F. Petal - ventral view; G. Corolla split open; H. Stamen - dorsal view; I. Stamen - ventral view; J. Gynoecium with calyx; K. L.S. of ovary; L. C.S. of ovary; M. Fruits; N. Seeds (Drawings by S.S. Mariappan).

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nearly at right angles to midrib, sometimes branched below margin, prominent above, faint beneath, looped near margin; petioles brown, grooved above, glabrous, 4.5-6.5 x 0.9-1.4 mm. Inflorescence in axillary or subterminal umbel, 5-9 flowers in each umbel; peduncles short, 10-22.5 x 0.5-0.75 mm, minutely rusty; bracts small, caducous; pedicels short, c. 5.25 x 0.5-1 mm, gland-dotted. Flowers 5-merous, bisexual, actinomorphic; calyx lobes 5, unequal, 0.65-1 x 0.65-0.75 mm, ovate-deltoid, valvate, immersed gland inside, ciliate at margin, subulate at apex; glands immersed; corolla pink; tube c. 0.4 x 5 mm; lobes 5, twisted, narrowly ovate, c. 3.9 x 2 mm, bluntly acuminate at apex, immersed gland-dotted, cushion-like at base inside, distinctly nerved, glabrous. Stamens 5, antipetalous, inserted at throat, c. 2.7 x 1.4 mm; filaments yellowish brown, c. 0.75 x 0.3 mm; anthers 2-celled, narrowly ovate, golden yellow, sagittate at base, c. 2.25 x 1 mm, aseptate, dehiscing longitudinally, apiculate at apex; ovary globose, c. 0.75 x 0.8 mm, glabrous, 1-celled; ovules few to many; style terete, c. 2.3 x 0.1-0.35 mm; stigma simple. Berries globose, red, black when ripe, 5.8-7 x 6.5-7.5 mm; styles acicular, persistent, geniculate, c. 2.75 x 1 mm. Seeds globose, striated, c. 5.6 x 5.9 mm.

Flowering and fruiting: It flowers from January to March and from September to November, and fruits from February to April and from October to December.

Specimens examined: INDIA: **Kerala:** Travancore, Feb. 1887, *Bourdillon s.n.* (MH); **Tamil Nadu:** Madurai dist., High Wavy mountains, 7 Sep. 1925, *Jacob 77090* (MH); Tirunelveli district, Thalimalai, 15 Feb. 2000, *Viswanathan & Manikandan 5494*; Narakkadu, 12 April 2000, *Viswanathan & Manikandan 5957*; Inchikuli, 1 Nov. 2000, *Viswanathan & Manikandan 6801* (Sri Paramakalyani Centre for Environmental Sciences).

Habitat: Southern tropical wet evergreen forests in association with trees such as *Cinnamomum filipedicellatum*, *Croton zeylanicus*, *Elaeocarpus venustus*, *Erythroxylum moonii* and *Euonymus dichotomus*, and shrubs such as *Croton caudatus*, *Hedyotis purpurascens* var. *pallida*, *Memecylon subramanii* and *Phyllanthus baillonianus*.

Distribution: Madurai and Tirunelveli districts in Tamil Nadu, and Travancore region in Kerala in India.

Acknowledgements

The senior author sincerely thanks the Ministry of Environment and Forests, New Delhi, for funding the project. Mr. U. Manikandan is thankful for the Senior Research Fellowship awarded. The authors acknowledge Mr. R. P. S. Katwal, Former Chief Wildlife Warden, Chennai, and Dr V. K. Melkani, Former Field Director and Conservator of Forests, Project Tiger, Tirunelveli, Tamil Nadu for permission to carry out the research in the Tiger Reserve and to collect specimens. The co-operation of the project staff, S. Pandidurai, S. Baskar and A. Lakshmikanthan, in the fieldwork, is gratefully remembered here.

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