39. DISTRIBUTION OF *OBERONIA BRACHYPHYLLA* BLATT. & MCCANN — A RARE, ENDEMIC ORCHID OF WESTERN GHATS, INDIA

*(With two text-figures)*

*Oberonia brachyphylla* Blatt. & McCann is one of the rare orchids listed in the red data book of Indian plants (Nayar and Sastry 1988). This tiny little orchid was described by Blatter and McCann (1931) from a detailed illustration prepared by T.R. Bell & Miss Bell, made from live specimens collected in North Kanara (Santapau and Kapadia 1966). Later, Santapau and Kapadia (loc. cit.) also collected it from North Kanara and reported it to be apparently endemic to North Kanara. Subsequent workers have recorded this species from other parts of Western Ghats. Joseph and Vajravelu (1976) reported it from Palghat district, Kerala. In 1981, Abraham and Vatsala reported it from Ponmudi, Kerala, which seems to be the southernmost recorded distribution of this orchid. Ansari *et al.* (1982) reported its distribution from North Kanara and Kerala, based on Santapau and Kapadia (loc. cit.), and Joseph and Vajravelu (loc. cit). But it is interesting to note that Vajravelu (1988), while discussing its distribution, has not taken North Kanara, Karnataka and Ponmudi, Kerala into account and mentioned only Hassan and Palghat districts. Ansari and Balakrishnan (1990) in their revision of *Oberonia* species mentioned only Maharashtra and Kerala as distribution centres. There is no mention of this species in *Flora of Maharashtra* by Lakshminarasimhan (1996). During our floristic survey of endemic plants of Western Ghats, we collected this species from two more localities: 1. Molem-Anmode, Goa. 2. Agumbe, Shimoga district, Karnataka. While examining the specimens at MH, the specimens from Chikmagalur, Karnataka were also noticed. Thus, it was observed that the distribution of this species was relatively unknown.

Small size and the lack of frequent and intensive collections could be the reasons for very few collected specimens of this species, as a result of which its distribution appeared to be restricted and fragmented. Now it is apparent that the species is distributed more or less continuously along the Western Ghats (Fig. 1). The specimens collected by us have been deposited in the Herbarium of the Department of Botany, Goa University.


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**Fig. 1:** Distribution of *Oberonia brachyphylla* Blatt. & McCann in Western Ghats

Fl. & Fr.: March-April.

Habitat: Epiphyte on *Garcinia* and *Ziziphus* spp.; on small twigs with moss, in open areas in evergreen forest patches.

Distribution: Western Ghats [Goa, Karnataka (N. Kanara, Shimoga, Chikmagalur, Hassan), Kerala (Palghat, Thiruvananthapuram district)]


Acknowledgements

We thank the Goa State Council for Science and Technology for financial assistance and the Deputy Director, MH, Coimbatore for permission to consult the Herbarium and Library.

April 1, 1999

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Fig. 2: *Oberonia brachyphylla* Blatt. & McCann A - habit; B - flower, C - dorsal sepal; D - lateral sepal; E & F - petals; G - lip
MISCELLANEOUS NOTES

References


