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Journal of Threatened Taxa

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Zoo Outreach Organisation
Years

10.11609/jott.2025.17.4.26763-26938

www.threatenedtaxa.org

26 April 2025 (Online & Print)

17(4): 26763-26938

ISSN 0974-7907 (Online)

ISSN 0974-7893 (Print)



Open Access





ISSN 0974-7907 (Online); ISSN 0974-7893 (Print)

Publisher

Wildlife Information Liaison Development Society

www.wild.zooreach.org

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Cover: Nilgiri Large Burrowing Spider *Haploclostus nilgirinus*. Acrylic on canvas. © Aakanksha Komanduri.



Ophiorrhiza japonica Blume (Rubiaceae): a new record for India

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The *Ophiorrhiza* genus, belonging to Rubiaceae, comprises 378 accepted species distributed in tropical and subtropical regions of Asia, Australia, New Guinea, and the Pacific Islands (POWO 2024). There are 64 species of this genus in India (Deb & Mondal 1997; Barik et al. 2018; Hareesh & Sabu 2018; Taher et al. 2020; Nair et al. 2021; BSI 2024). *O. japonica* is reported to be found in China, Japan, Taiwan, and Vietnam (POWO 2024). Species of the genus are perennial or annual herbs, ranging from creepers to tall erect shrubs that have a woody base, with leaves of simple, uneven, opposite pairs, that vary in size from species to species. The flowers are pentamerous and epigynous. The fruit is berry-like with tiny rhomboidal seeds (Don 1834; Deb & Mondal 1997; Taher et al. 2020). With the inclusion of the newly recorded species, 64 species of the genus *Ophiorrhiza* are presently known to be reported in India, with 35 taxa possibly endemic to India.

During floristic exploration of Manipur, the *Ophiorrhiza* species was sighted in its natural habitat, which was then collected for identification. The plant specimen was recorded from Shirui peak (25.112° N, 94.454° E, 2,435 m), Ukhrul District, Manipur, India. The collected specimens were identified as *Ophiorrhiza*

japonica Blume using pertinent literature (Don 1834; Nakamura et al. 2007; Chen & Taylor 2011; POWO 2024; Tropicos 2024) and type specimen images available at Kew herbarium and Herbarium Institute of Botany, Academia Sinica (HAST). This species is a new record to the flora of India. Deb & Mondal (1997), documented the medicinal values of *O. japonica* in the Indian subcontinent but the geographic location of its occurrence in India was not mentioned. A sample of the specimen was brought to the Institute of Bioresources and Sustainable Development (IBSD), Imphal, and preserved in herbarium sheet for future reference. The descriptions of the plant are illustrated and described here in detail (Image 1).

Ophiorrhiza japonica Blume in Bijdr. Fl. Ned. Ind.: 978 (1826). *Ophiorrhiza acutiloba* Hayata Icon. Pl. Formosan. 2: 86 (1912). *Ophiorrhiza cavaleriei* H. Lév. Repert. Spec. Nov. Regni Veg. 13: 177 (1914). *Ophiorrhiza dimorphantha* Hayata in Icon. Pl. Formosan. 2: 86 (1912). *Ophiorrhiza eryei* Champ. in Hooker's J. Bot. Kew Gard. Misc. 4: 170 (1852). *Ophiorrhiza kwangsiensis* Merr. Ex Li in J. Arn. Arb. 24: 453 (1943). *Ophiorrhiza labordei* H. Lév. Repert. Spec. Nov. Regni Veg. 13: 177 (1914). *Ophiorrhiza monticola* Hayata Icon. Pl.

Editor: A.J. Solomon Raju, Andhra University, Visakhapatnam, India.

Date of publication: 26 April 2025 (online & print)

Citation: Chanu, N.M., P. Langkan, T.N. Khangnaba & T. Biseshwori (2025). *Ophiorrhiza japonica* Blume (Rubiaceae): a new record for India. *Journal of Threatened Taxa* 17(4): 26932–26935. <https://doi.org/10.11609/jott.9303.17.4.26932-26935>

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Funding: None.

Competing interests: The authors declare no competing interests.

Acknowledgements: We acknowledge the director, Institute of Bioresources and Sustainable Development- DBT, Imphal, Manipur, for encouraging and granting permission for field surveys. We are also thankful to the locals of Shirui Village for their co-operation. Further gratitude extended to Mayengbam Aldrin and lab members of Plant Systematics and Conservation Laboratory for their assistance in the study.



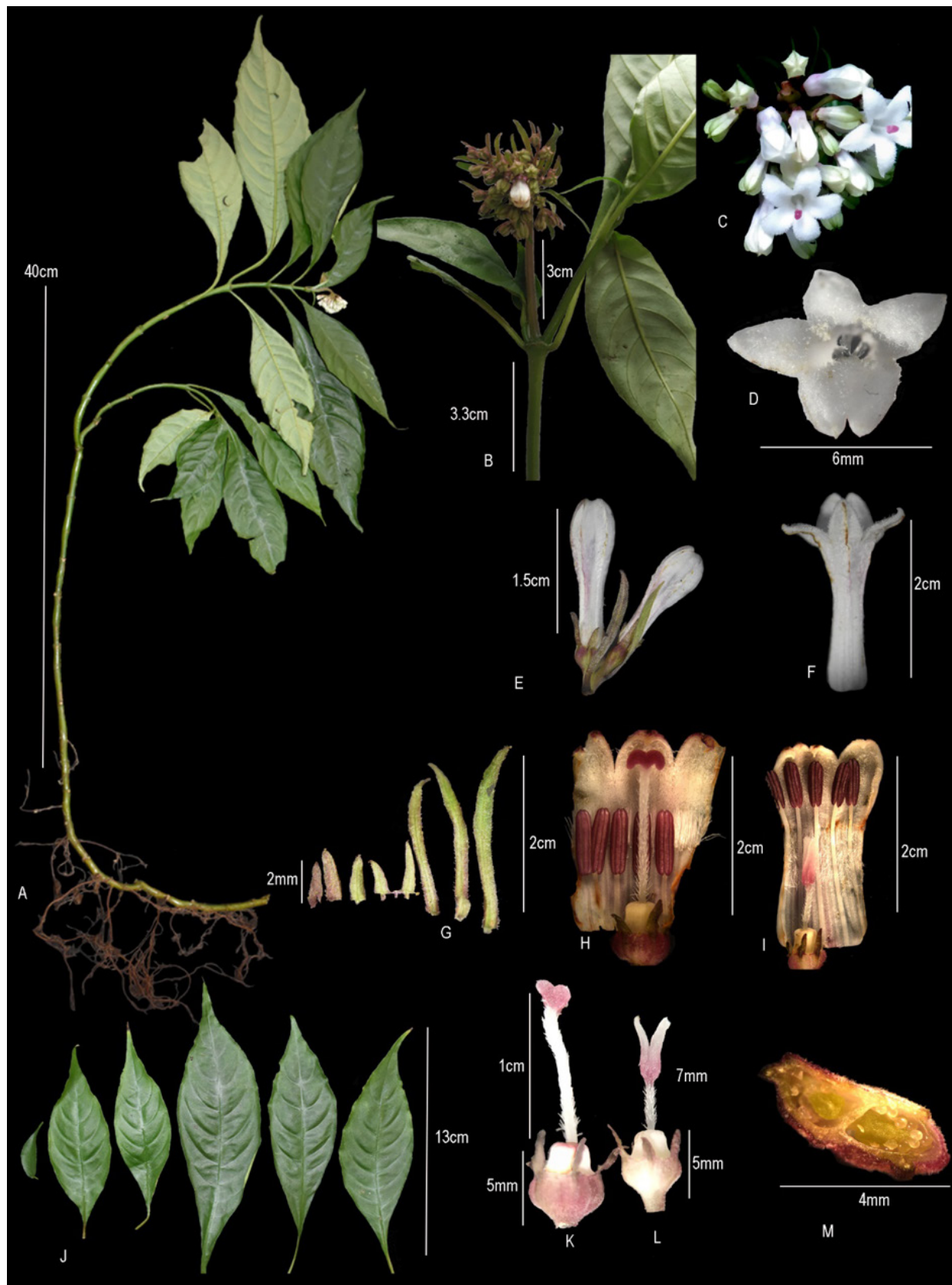


Image 1. *Ophiorrhiza japonica*: A—Plant | B—A twig with inflorescence | C—Inflorescence | D—Flower top view | E—Young flower buds | F—Corolla | G—Calyx and bracts | H—Longitudinally dissected long-styled flower | I—Longitudinally dissected short-styled flower | J—Leaves | K—Calyx with style and stigma of long styled flower | L—Calyx with style and stigma of short styled flower | M—Cross-section of ovary. © Peimichon Langkan.



Image 2. Herbarium specimen of *Ophiorrhiza japonica* prepared and deposited at Institute of Bioresources and Sustainable Development (IBSD/M-302).

Formosan. 2: 89 (1912). *Ophiorrhiza nigricans* H.S.Lo in Bull. Bot. Res., Harbin 10(2): 53 (1990). *Ophiorrhiza tashiroi* Maxim. Bull. Acad. Imp. Sci. Saint-Petersbourg, sér. 3, 32: 489 (1888).

Type: Japan, Chiba Pref., Awa-gun, Mt. Kiyosumi, 1937-03-20, Tomitaro Makino 104364 (Isotype, HAST [62464 digital image!]; syn K [K000740554 digital image!]); Taiwan, Hualien County, Wanrong township, ca. 22 km from entrance of Wanjung forest road, 1,120 m, 1999-05-30, Wu, Shu-Hui 1398 (Isotype, HAST [78315 digital image!]).

Herb, 40–60 cm tall; stems weak and ascending, subterete, light green to dark green. Leaves uneven, opposite pairs, ovate, ovate-lanceolate, ovate-elliptic, elliptic, apex acute or acuminate, 2.5–14 x 0.7–4 cm, margins slightly upcurved, entire, 4–10 pairs of pinnate veins, adaxially darker, hispidulous or glabrous; abaxially, pale green, puberulent or glabrous. Petiole 0.4–3 cm, smooth or with fine trichomes or puberulent, stipules triangular, acute, caducous, 1–2 mm, glabrescent. Inflorescence cymose, congested cymose, with few to many flowers, hirtellous, puberulent or with strigose.

Heterostylous flowers; long style, 1 cm, with slender fascicled hairs around the anther, corolla white with a tinge of pale green at the outer tip, while short style, 0.7 cm, with fine short hairs, hirtellous, scattered sparsely around the throat of corolla, white to pale purplish-pink ombre towards the adaxial tip of corolla. Bracts persistent, linear lanceolate, 0.1–1 cm. Calyx smooth or pillose. Globular hypanthium, 1–5 mm, usually ribbed-pentamerous. Corolla funnel shaped tube, 1–2 cm, winged dorsally, outer glabrous to pubescent, pilosulous or hirtellous inside, apex rostrate, white or pinkish. Sub-mitriform capsules, pilosulous to glabrous reported, but capsules not seen at the time of collection.

Flowering and fruiting: December–April.

Vernacular name: Vanaohan (Local dialect).

Ecology and habitat: Wild, terrestrial, found growing in semi-deciduous, moist temperate forest.

Specimen examined: India, Manipur, Ukhrul, Shirui peak, 25.112° N, 94.454° E, 2,435 m, 22 March 2024, IBSD/M-302 (Image 2).

Distribution: India (Manipur), China, Japan, Taiwan, and Vietnam.

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The Managing Editor, JoTT,
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3A2 Varadarajulu Nagar, FCI Road, Ganapathy, Coimbatore,
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Journal of Threatened Taxa is indexed/abstracted in Bibliography of Systematic Mycology, Biological Abstracts, BIOSIS Previews, CAB Abstracts, EBSCO, Google Scholar, Index Copernicus, Index Fungorum, JournalSeek, National Academy of Agricultural Sciences, NewJour, OCLC WorldCat, SCOPUS, Stanford University Libraries, Virtual Library of Biology, Zoological Records.

NAAS rating (India) 5.64



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ISSN 0974-7907 (Online) | ISSN 0974-7893 (Print)

April 2025 | Vol. 17 | No. 4 | Pages: 26763–26938

Date of Publication: 26 April 2025 (Online & Print)

DOI: 10.11609/jott.2025.17.4.26763-26938

www.threatenedtaxa.org

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