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Cover: Freshly emerged Footman Moth *Nepita conferta* from the cocoon on a brightly painted wall in the Nilgiris. Digital art on Procreate. © Aakanksha Komanduri.



The first distribution record of semelparous plant Thottukurinji *Strobilanthes integrifolia* (Dalzell) Kuntze (family Acanthaceae) for Gujarat, India

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The genus *Strobilanthes* Blume consists of about 465 species, in India represented by 154 species (Albertson & Venu 2024) and it is the second-largest genus in the family Acanthaceae, which is distributed mainly in the wet-non-deciduous forests of the Western Ghats and Himalaya (Karthikeyan et al. 2010). Despite the level of diversity and the ecological importance of the genus, as some species are locally abundant, even subdominant in the shrub layer of hill forest, species delimitation remains problematic, essentially because many species are poorly known and rarely collected, mainly because of their ‘pletiesial’ flowering pattern. It is distributed in southern & southeastern Asia and Melanesia (Wood & Scotland 2009; Mabberley 2017; Wood et al. 2022).

The Girnar Hills situated between the parallels of latitude 21.530° N and meridians of longitude 70.530° E (Figure 1; Image 1). From the 10 biogeographic zones of India, Girnar Wildlife Sanctuary is classified as the semi-arid zone (Wainer 2015). During field work in the month of December 2024, the authors observed an interesting species of *Strobilanthes* in both flowering and fruiting stages at high elevations of Datar Hills, Girnar Wildlife

Sanctuary, and Dudhvada range, Tapi. Upon further investigation of morphological characteristics, it is identified as *Strobilanthes integrifolia* (Dalzell) Kuntze. It has not been recorded from the Gujarat State (Patel 1971; Shah 1978; Albertson & Venu 2024). The species, *S. integrifolia* is previously known only from peninsular India (Venu 2006). The detailed photographs are presented in Images 2, 3 and 4. The voucher specimens (BKNMU412 & BKNMU413) are deposited at the Department of Life Sciences, Bhakta Kavi Narsinh Mehta University, Junagadh, Gujarat.

Taxonomic treatment

Strobilanthes integrifolia (Dalzell) Kuntze, Revis. Gen. Pl. 2: 499. 1891. Gamble, Fl. Madras: 1043. 1924; Venu, *Strobilanthes* Penins. India: 117, f. 24, 24a. 2006 (as “*integrifolius*”); Karthik. & al., Fl. Pl. India 1: 51. 2009; J. Bhattacharya & al. in Flow. Pl. India Annotat. Checkl. (Dicot.) 2: 309. 2020; W.D. Albertson & Venu in Fl. India 21: 664. 2024.

Synonyms: *Endopogon integrifolius* Dalzell, *Leptacanthus alatus* Wight., *Leptacanthus integrifolius*

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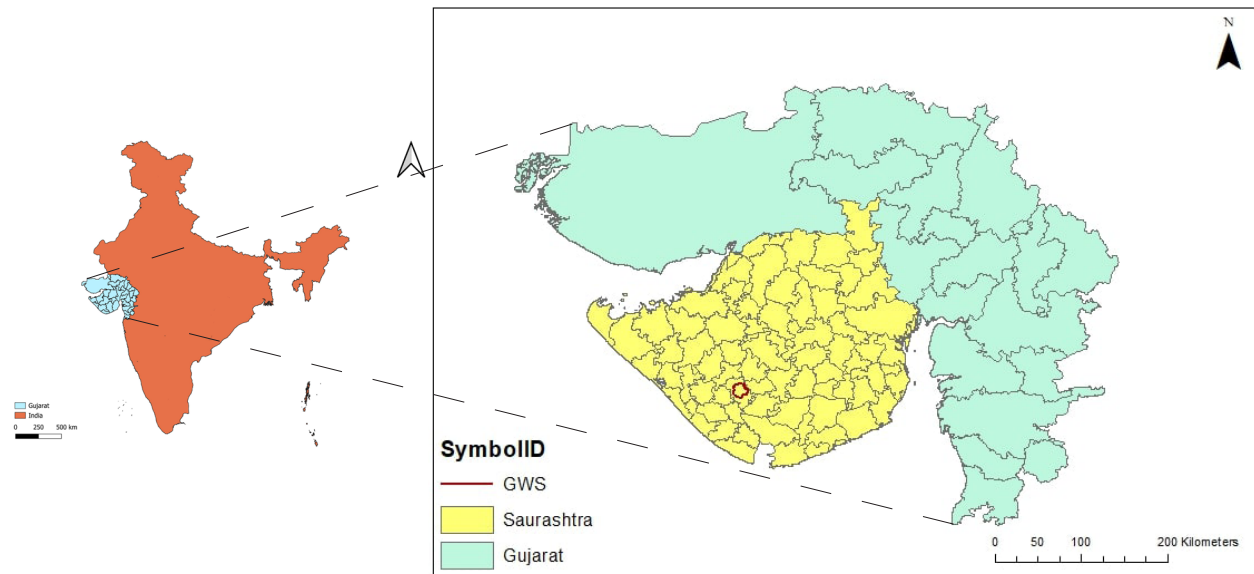


Figure 1. Gujarat state map: GWS—Girnar Wildlife Sanctuary.

(Dalzell) M.R.Almeida., *Mackenzia integrifolia* (Dalzell) Bremek., *Strobilanthes perfoliata* T.Anderson.

1–2 m tall shrub. Leaves opposite, elliptic-lanceolate, 5–10 cm long and 2–5 cm wide, acuminate at apex, tapering at base, margins entire, with winged petiole. Flowers occur in terminal spikes, 5–12 cm long, flowers with strong pleasant fragrance, bilipped, 3–4 cm long and tubular at base, sessile. Rachis tetragonal, viscous hairy; peduncles usually short. Bracts and bracteoles are glandular. Calyx 0.9–1.0 cm long, divided nearly to base; segments linear, subacute, one longer than the other four; corolla dark blue, glabrous outside, hairy inside, 2.8–3 cm long, with five lobes; stamens in didynamous (2 long and 2 short stamens), filaments of long stamens are hairy, filaments of short stamens are glabrous. Pollens 63–71 μm polar axis and 37–50 μm equatorial diameter. Capsules 0.5–1.0 cm, 2-seeded, compressed; seeds small, ovoid.

Common name: Entire-Leaf Coneflower

Etymology: *Strobilanthes* come from Greek word 'strobilos' (pine cone) and 'anthos' (flower), referring to cone-like inflorescences. *Integrifolia* comes from Latin 'integer' (whole, entire) and 'folius' (leaf), referring to the undivided leaves.

Flowering & Fruiting: December to March.

Note: Flowering once in every 7 years.

Specimens examined: India, Gujarat, Junagadh District: Datar Hills (21.498° N, 70.501° E) and Girnar hills (21.533° N, 70.525° E), Girnar Wildlife Sanctuary; 929 m elevation, *Rasik Sojitra* and *Snehal Gamit*, BKNMU412 & BKNMU413.



Image 1. Map showing area of Girnar Wildlife Sanctuary, Junagadh, Gujarat.

Distribution: Goa, Gujarat (present report), Karnataka, Kerala, and Maharashtra. Endemic to India.

Ecology: This small shrub, found in dry deciduous forests, nearby moist and rocky habitat, in the forest undergrowth. It is associated with *Carissa spinarum* L. and *Jasmine officinale* L.

Threats: The species is threatened by pilgrim activities at the Upla Datar, road-widening, and grazing pressure from cattle, leading to habitat degradation and reduced regeneration.

Conservation status: Not assessed.



Image 2. *Strobilanthes integrifolia*. © Rasik Sojitra and Snehal Gamit.

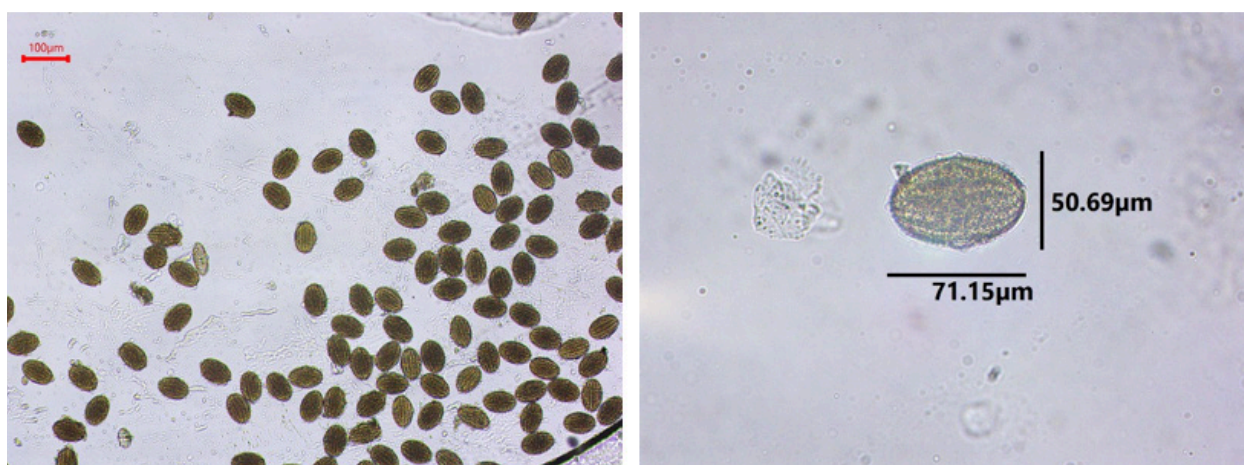


Image 3. Pollens of *Strobilanthes integrifolia*. © Rasik Sojitra and Snehal Gamit.

Key to the *Strobilanthes* species in Gujarat

- 1a. Flowers bright rosy-purple *S. urens*
- 1b. Flowers pale blue to dark blue 2
- 2a. Leaf margins entire 3
- 2b. Leaf margins serrate 5
- 3a. Inflorescence terminal; bracts imbricate; flowers sessile *S. integrifolia*
- 3b. Inflorescence axillary; bracts not imbricate; flowers pedicellate 4
- 4a. Leaves coriaceous, glabrous *S. callosa*
- 4b. Leaves membranous to chartaceous, pubescent *S. ixiocephalus*
- 5a. Prostrate herb..... *S. hirta*
- 5b. Erect herb *S. pavala*

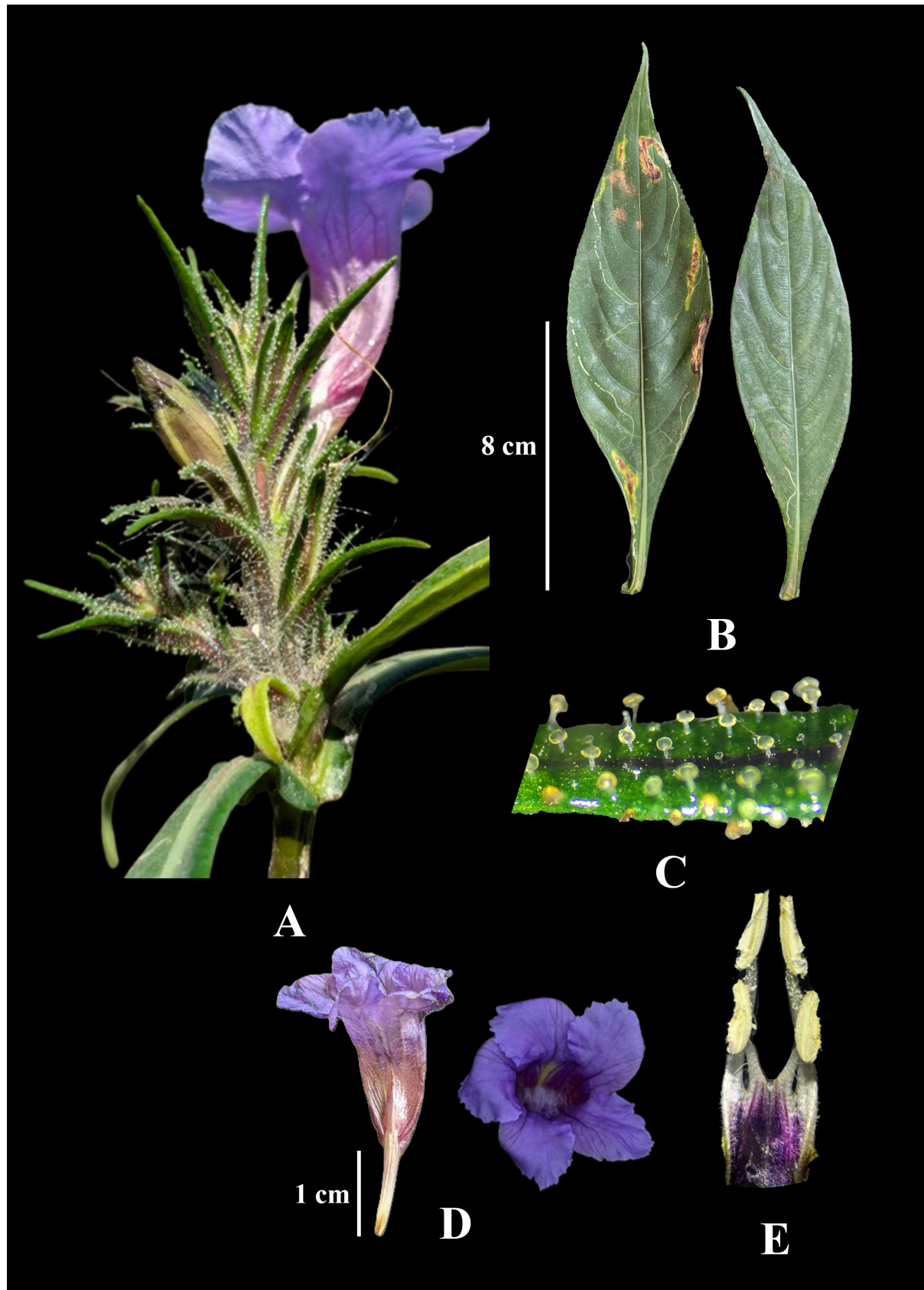


Image 4. *Strobilanthes integrifolia*: A—Inflorescence | B—Leaves | C—Glandular bract | D—Corolla | E—Didynamous stamens. © Rasik Sojitra and Snehal Gamit.

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