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continued on the back inside cover

Cover: Orange Oakleaf *Kallima inachus* with colour pencils and watercolor wash by Elakshi Mahika Molur adapted from a workshop by Lenin Raj.



Ocimum gratissimum L. ssp. *gratissimum* var. *macrophyllum* Briq. (Lamiaceae: Nepetoideae: Ocimeae) a new record from northeastern India

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Abstract: The genus *Ocimum* means fragrant-lipped, characterized by the presence of the upper lobe of the calyx, which is large and decurrent. *Ocimum gratissimum* L. is conventionally known as Clove Basil due to its foliage which smells like cloves. The present study reports the extant distribution of *O. gratissimum* L. ssp. *gratissimum* var. *macrophyllum* Briq. across northeastern India. It is a new distribution record for the flora of Assam and northeastern India. A comprehensive description along with photographs, taxonomic notes, and diagnostic keys has been provided to aid identification.

Keywords: Assam, distribution, flora, keys, lipped, taxonomy.

Abbreviations: L./LINN—Linnaeus | APG—Angiosperm Phylogeny Group | GPS—Global Positioning System | ARUN—Arunachal Pradesh Regional Centre, Itanagar, Arunachal Pradesh | ASSAM—Eastern Regional Centre, Shillong, Meghalaya | CAL—Central National Herbarium, Howrah, West Bengal | GUBH—Gauhati University Botanical Herbarium | BSI—Botanical Survey of India | IVH—Indian Virtual Herbarium | JSTOR—Journal Storage | G—Conservatoire et Jardin botaniques de la Ville de Genève | K/KEW—Royal Botanic Garden, Kew | MNHN—Muséum national d'Histoire naturelle | MO—Missouri Botanical Garden's Herbarium | NY—New York Botanical Garden Herbarium | BSID—Deccan Regional Centre, Hyderabad.

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Author contributions: ND and DN conceptualized and supervised the research work; MK did the field and laboratory works, and drafted the manuscript. ND and DN finalized the manuscript, and MK communicated to the Journal.

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INTRODUCTION

Commonly known as ‘Tulsi’ in Hindi and ‘Toolakhi’ in Assamese, ‘Basil’ (Empress of all herbs) descended from the Greek word ‘Basileus’ which means royal, and ‘*Ocimum*’ from ‘okimon’ which purports an aromatic herb. *Ocimum* L. is chiefly an ‘East Indian’ genus (Bentham 1832). The primary centre of origin is Africa, Tropical Asia, and Central and South America, while India is the secondary centre (Pushpangadan & Sobti 1982). According to APG IV, *Ocimum gratissimum* is a member of the tribe Ocimeae Dumort., subfamily Nepetoideae Burnett in the mint family Lamiaceae Martinov (Stevens 2001 onwards). The specific epithet ‘*gratissimum*’ explains an exaggerated expression of pleasantness due to the aroma of the species. The species have a more substantial degree of fragrance than other *Ocimum* L. species (Roxburgh 1832). *O. gratissimum* has two accepted sub-specific taxa, *O. gratissimum* ssp. *gratissimum* and *O. gratissimum* ssp. *iringense* Ayob. ex Paton. The latter subspecies is confined to Tanzania, while ssp. *gratissimum* is native to the tropical and sub-tropical old world. The variety *macrophyllum* was first acknowledged by Briquet (1894) affirming the distribution of var. *macrophyllum* in India Orientalis. According to Ryding (2000), var. *macrophyllum* is widespread in the tropics from India to western Africa. The var. *macrophyllum* got introduced from or to India and later disseminated through African cultivation. The variety was acknowledged by Paton (1992) while investigating *Ocimum* L. in Africa. He found a few forms of *O. gratissimum* in Uganda and Tanzania, corresponding to var. *macrophyllum* in having lax inflorescence, calyx, and leaf indumentum. The distinction of the varieties based on morphological characteristics conceals the facts acquired from genetic and secondary product variation. Such high degree variation is found in var. *gratissimum* against var. *macrophyllum* (Vieira et al. 2001). The var. *macrophyllum* is recognized by glabrous or pubescent leaves (hairs scattered over lower nerves) and hairy inflorescence (Albuquerque & Andrade 1998). While revising the tribe *Ocimeae* Dumort., Suddee et al. (2005) distinguished both varieties of *O. gratissimum* ssp. *gratissimum* (var. *gratissimum* and var. *macrophyllum*) and their distribution from India. The var. *macrophyllum* might have arisen from var. *gratissimum* in response to environmental constrain (Paton et al. 2009).

The Indian subcontinent is acknowledged by ssp. *gratissimum*. The var. *macrophyllum* is treated within ssp. *gratissimum* and reported earlier from different states of India, except Himachal Pradesh, Jammu &

Kashmir, Uttarakhand, and northeastern India. In the present study, the variety *macrophyllum* is being reported for the first time from Assam.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The specimens of the var. *macrophyllum* were collected from Jorhat district of Assam during our field survey conducted in 2019–22. Field photographs and GPS locations were recorded using a digital camera. The micro-morphological features were investigated on living specimens using a Labomed CZM4 stereo zoom binocular microscope. Further, photo plates were prepared using Adobe Photoshop 7.0. The variety was identified by consulting regional and national herbaria, such as ARUN, ASSAM, CAL, and GUBH, and through relevant literature (Floras, Journals, Revisions, and Synopsis). The microfilms of herbarium specimens from online databases BSI-IVH, G, JSTOR, KEW, LINN, MNHN, MO, and NY were also consulted for identification. The new distributional record of the variety was confirmed through research articles and literary works such as checklist, flora, and floristic records of northeastern India, along with physical verification of herbarium records held by ARUN, ASSAM, CAL, and GUBH. The morphological affirmations were correlated with lectotype G00018935 and photographs acquired from MNHN (Image 1). The common and vernacular names are given in English (E), Hindi (H), and Assamese (A).

TAXONOMIC TREATMENT

***Ocimum gratissimum* L. ssp. *gratissimum* var. *macrophyllum* Briq.**

Bull. Herb. Boissier 2: 120.1894; Paton in Kew Bulletin. 47: 417.1992; Paton, Harley & Harley in Holm & Hiltunen, Basil: *Ocimum*. 25.1999; Ryding in Fl. Somalia 3: 341.2006.

Type: Lectotype (LT): G00018935, Madagascar, Bourbon, Boivin L.H. LT present in Conservatoire et Jardin botaniques de la Ville de Genève (G) and photo of type in K!

Description: Perennial shrubs, 1.5–2 m tall; Stem erect, much branched, woody at the base, rounded quadrangular, glabrous; Leaves 6–12 × 4.5–7 cm in size, serrate, surface smooth, hairs restricted to veins beneath, apex acuminate, multicostate divergent reticulate venation; Petiole 1.5–4 cm long, slender; Inflorescence 15–22 cm long, lax, axis glabrescent, verticils 0.8–1.2 cm apart; Bracts 3–4 × 1.8–2.5 mm, green, ovate with broad base, caducous, apex acute, base cordate, sub sessile or

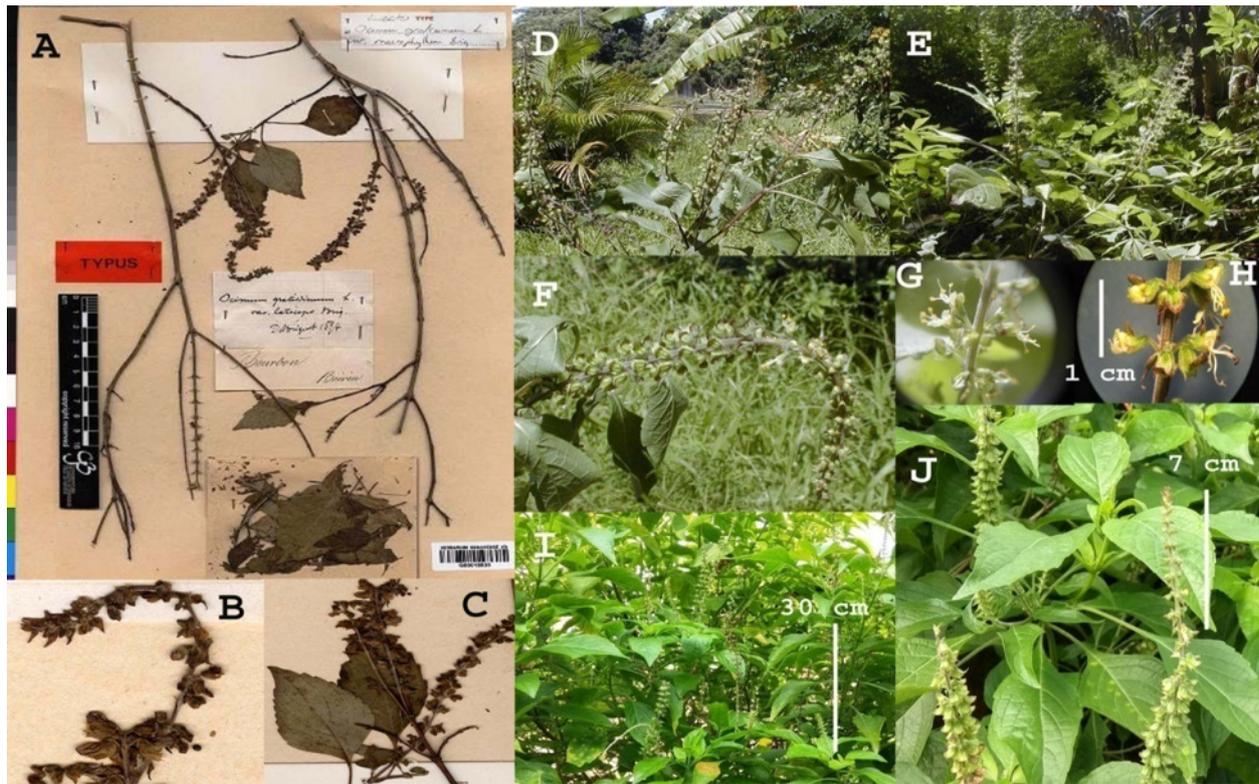


Image 1. *O. gratissimum* L. ssp. *gratissimum* var. *macrophyllum* Briq: A–C—Lectotype specimen (G00018935) | B—Magnified view of inflorescence | C—Leaves | D—PDIG00000651 | E—PDIG00001680 | F—PDIG00000652 | G—PDIG00001681 | H—Magnified sight of verticils and flowers | I—Habit | J—Leaves with Inflorescence. Source: (A–C) Reproduced with permission from Catalogue des herbiers de Genève (CHG) | (D–G) with permission from Fabien Barthelat / Muséum national d’Histoire naturelle (MNHN–Paris) | (H–J) © Mamita Kalita.

sessile, margin ciliate, pubescent on both sides; Pedicels 3–3.5 mm long, pubescent, spreading, recurved; Calyx 2–3.2 × 2–3.5 mm, slightly downwards pointing against the inflorescence axis, green, slightly purplish at tips, posterior lip rounded, wider at tip, acute apex, decurrent on tube, anterior lip shorter than posterior, two hooked lateral curved teeth (uncinate lip) slightly lower than the two median teeth, median lobes of anterior lip pressed against posterior one in fruiting calyx, throat closed, tube with patent hairs or without; Corolla 4–5.5 × 2–3 mm, light pastel yellow, barely exceeding the calyx, lobes obscurely crenate, minute hairs at back, posterior lip oblong and comparatively shorter than anterior lip, lobes are equal in length, anterior lip boat shaped, tube straight, puberulous outside, glabrous inside; Stamens 4.5–5 mm, occasionally equal in length with anterior stamens, posterior pair having tufts of hairs at base (barbate filament base); Gynoecium 6.5–8 mm, two equal lobes, curled bifid stigma, ovary more or less globose; Nutlets 1.8–2.2 × 1.5–2 mm, ivory in colour, brown at maturity, sub globose, minutely tuberculate, producing mucilage when wet (Image 2).

Flowering and Fruiting: It was observed in July.

Common names: African Basil, Clove Basil, East Indian Basil, Russian Basil, Shrubby Basil, Tree Basil, Wild Basil, Tea Bush (E), Ban Tulsi, Jangli Tulsi, Vriadhya Tulsi, Mali Tulsi, Ram Toolsee (H) and Ram toolakhi (A).

Key to the Infra-specifics of *Ocimum gratissimum* L.

1. Flower verticils 1–1.5 cm apart, not strongly reflexed towards the inflorescence axis; flowering and fruiting calyces recurved *O. gratissimum* ssp. *gratissimum*
2. Inflorescence 10–13 cm long, dense, axis softly pubescent; leaves pubescent on both sides; calyx horizontal or slightly upward pointing *O. gratissimum* var. *gratissimum*
2. Inflorescence 15–22 cm long, lax, axis glabrescent; hairs restricted to veins beneath; calyx downward pointing *O. gratissimum* var. *macrophyllum*
1. Flower verticils 0.7–1.0 cm apart, strongly reflexed towards the inflorescence axis; flowering and fruiting calyces decurved *O. gratissimum* ssp. *iringense*

Specimen examined

Africa: Réunion. Boivin, L.H. -21.1216E , 55.5380S. *O. gratissimum* L. var. *macrophyllum* Briq. Herbarium Genavense (G), Lectotype (G00018935!). **Madagascar:** L.J. Dorr, 24.ii.1985. Original material? of *O. gratissimum* var. *macrophyllum* Briq. MO-694055! Coll.No.3779. Verified by Paton, 1998. **Bangladesh:** Flora of Chittagong hill tracts, Dr. King's Collector, viii.1886, Herb. Hort. Bot. Calcuttensis, CAL 351774! CAL 351775! **India, Andhra Pradesh:** Godavari, M.S. Ramaswami, 13.viii.1914, CAL 351792! Coll.No.1682; East Godavari, Daragatta, M. Mohanan, 17.xii.1993, altitude 550m, BSID0005839! Coll.No.100749. **Assam:** Flora of North Cachar, Haflong, William Craib, 17.viii.1908, Herb. Hort. Bot. Calcuttensis, CAL 351776! Koliapani, N. Kalita & S. Haque, 20.v.2001, ARUN000012603! and 16.xii.2008, ARUN000012604! **Karnataka:** Flora of North Kanara, W.A Talbot, 1889, CAL 351800! Coll.No.1935; Coorg, Mercara, B.C Banerjee, 31.x.1976, CAL 0000008663! Coll.No.11686. **Kerala:** Flora of Travancore, Quilon, M. Rama Rao, 13.viii.1913, CAL 351785! Coll.No.2252; Kozhikode, Kapad Shore, T.A. Rao, 09.xi.1972, CAL 11412! Coll.No.9839. **Lakshadweep:** Chetlat Island, B.M. Wadhwa, 28.ii.1959, CAL 6616! CAL 6617! Coll.No.49132. **Manipur:** Flora of Munneypore, Irang, C.B. Clarke, 27.xi.1885, CAL 351777! Flora of Manipur, Bishenpur, A. Meebold, xi.1907, No accession number. **Odisha:** Ganjam, Rocky hill Gopalpur, D. Prain, 1889, CAL 351793! Ramgiri, G.V. Subba Rao 19.xii.1962, ASSAM 36069! ASSAM 36070! **Tamil Nadu:** Coimbatore, Bolampatti Valley, C.E.C. Fisher, 22.ix.1900, altitude 1600m, CAL 351790! Coll. No.2205; AlagarKoil reserve forest, S. R. Srinivasan, 20.x.1988, altitude 300 m, BSID0012445! Coll. No.89407. **Telangana:** Khammam, Perantappally Forest, Pappikonda Hills, R. Chandrasekaran, 19.ii.1994, altitude 250 m, BSID0005841! Coll.No.98988; Borapuram (Mahabubnagar), B. Sadasivaiah & S. Khadar Basha, 04.xi.2008, altitude 615 m, BSID0005843! Coll.No.32360. **Tripura:** Rajnagar, B.K. Huidrom, 26.viii.1995, ASSAM 57229! **Assam:** Jorhat, Near Hoollongapar Gibbon sanctuary, 26.6785654N 94.3555723E, altitude 93 m, 21.vii.2019, Mamita Kalita, Coll.No. 63 (JHOG02).

Taxonomic note

The variety epithet '*macrophyllum*' is a Greek word which intent large-sized leaves of the specimen. Earlier, five varieties of ssp. *gratissimum*, have been recognized, one by Hooker (1885) and the rest four by Briquet (1894, 1898). Hooker (1885) reduced *O. suave* Willd. to a variety of *O. gratissimum* var. *suavis*, and distinct the

variety from *O. gratissimum* in leaf pubescence. Briquet (1894) established three varieties, viz., *macrophyllum*, *mascarenarum*, *hildebrandtii*, and later *subdentatum* in 1898. However, only a single variety (*macrophyllum*) is acknowledged, and the others are accepted as synonyms. Morton (1962) found insufficient evidence for establishing intermediates of *O. gratissimum*. He considered *O. suave* and *O. gratissimum* as different species based on chromosome number, $2n = 64$ and $2n = 40, 48$, respectively. Similar chromosome numbers ($2n = 64$) were obtained by Darlington & Wylie (1955) from the Indian material of *O. gratissimum*. Also, differences based on leaf epidermal characteristics were analyzed by Olowokudejo & Pereira-Shateolu (1988). Khosla (1995) found *O. suave* contrasting from *O. viride* Willd. and *O. gratissimum*. Based on taxonomic and genetic relationships, he further concluded their origin from a common ancestor. Currently, both *O. suave* and *O. viride* exists as a synonym of *O. gratissimum* ssp. *gratissimum*. The var. *macrophyllum* is definite from var. *gratissimum* in having lax inflorescence and sparse indumentum. This incarceration is held up by referencing Indian material, where the discontinuity between the two varieties is also supported. The consulted herbarium specimens ARUN000012603, ARUN000012604, CAL 351776 pertaining to Assam and CAL 351777, ASSAM 57229 of Manipur and Tripura, respectively, are identified as *Ocimum gratissimum*. However, these specimens were found morphologically dissimilar from the variety described in the present study. Thus, it led to an establishment of new distribution record for the var. *macrophyllum* in northeastern India.

DISCUSSION

The species *O. gratissimum* popularly known as scent leaf, has potential bioactive compounds such as polyphenols and flavonoids. The var. *macrophyllum* is undoubtedly similar to clove basil, which may serve as an alternative to drugs. The variety can also make its appearance as a new medicinal plant. *O. gratissimum* L. ssp. *gratissimum* var. *macrophyllum* Briq. is a new distributional record for northeastern India and Assam. The investigations of var. *macrophyllum* are similar to the description given by Paton (1992) while revising the tribe *Ocimeae* in Africa. The present study has provided comprehensive data on the odoriferous specimen's diagnosis, distribution, elucidation, and taxonomic status.

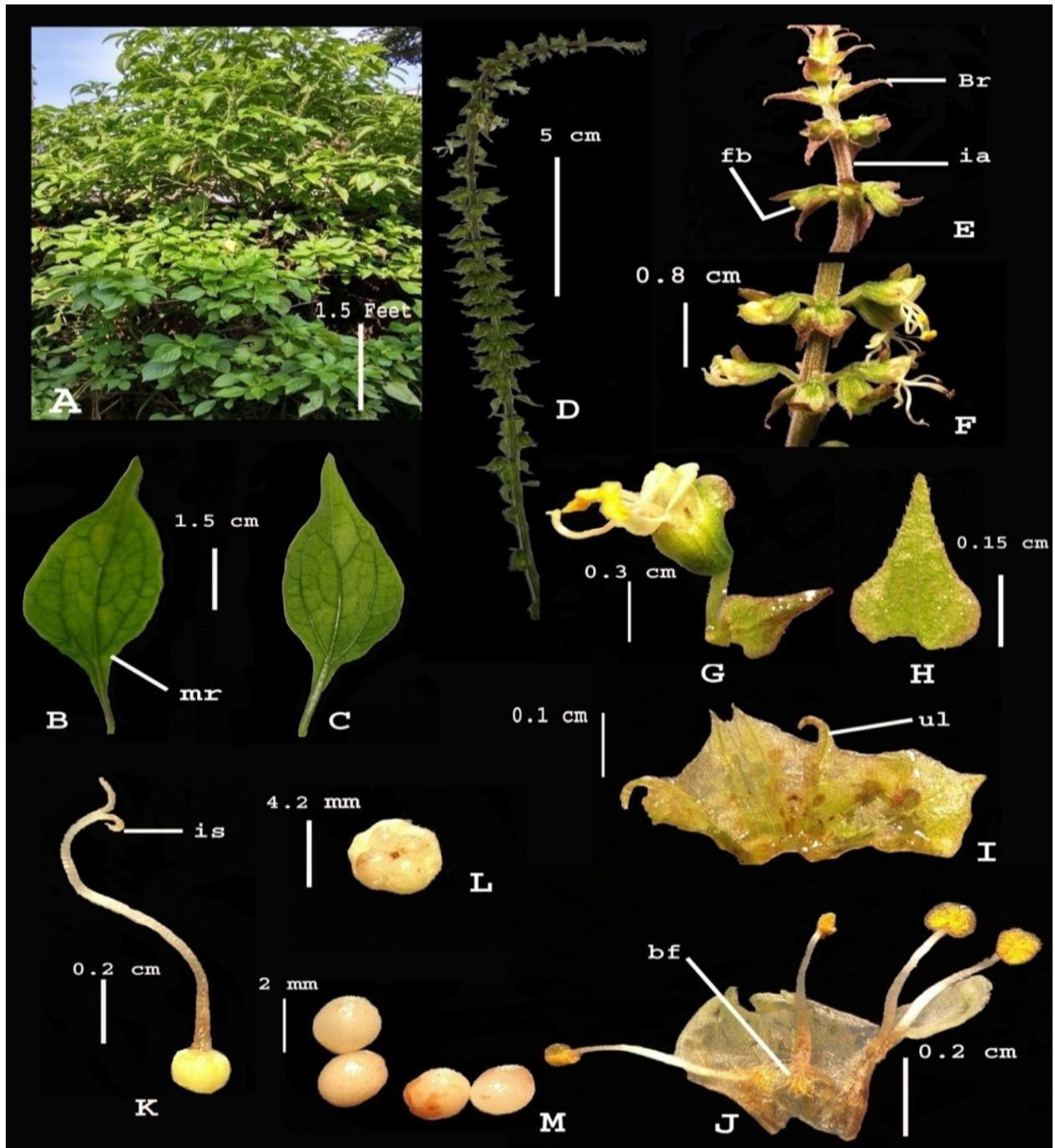


Image 2. *Ocimum gratissimum* L. ssp. *gratissimum* var. *macrophyllum* Briq: A—Habit of the plant | B—Leaf adaxial side showing multicostate reticulate (mr) venation | C—Leaf abaxial side | D—Inflorescence | E—Inflorescence tip showing flower bud (fb), inflorescence axis (ia) and bract (Br) | F—Closure view of inflorescence showing floral arrangement | G—Complete flower | H— Bract | I—Calyx dissected view displaying unciniate lip (ul) | J—Dissected corolla showing epipetalous stamen, barbate filament (bf) base | K— Gynoecium exhibiting gynobasic incurved style (is) and bifid stigma | L—Ovary revealing ovules | M—Nutlets. © Mamita Kalita.

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Articles

Echolocation call characterization of insectivorous bats from caves and karst areas in southern Luzon Island, Philippines

– Renz Angelo Duco, Anna Pauline de Guia, Judeline Dimalibot, Phillip Alviola & Juan Carlos Gonzalez, Pp. 23931–23951

Seasonality, diversity, and forest type associations of macro moths (Insecta: Lepidoptera: Heterocera) in the Shiwalik landscape of northern India and its conservation implications

– Arun Pratap Singh & Lekhendra, Pp. 23952–23976

Vertebrate assemblages on fruiting figs in the Indian eastern Himalaya's Pakke Wildlife Sanctuary

– Akangkshya Priya Gogoi, Janmejay Sethy, Awadhesh Kumar, Dipika Parbo, Murali Krishna Chatakonda & Ajay Maletha, Pp. 23977–23989

Communications

From the Arabian Peninsula to Indian shores: Crab Plover *Dromas ardeola* Paykull, 1805 (Aves: Charadriiformes: Dromadidae) breeding at Point Calimere, India

– H. Byju, N. Raveendran & K.M. Aarif, Pp. 23990–23995

Assessing avian diversity and conservation status in Dighal Wetlands, Haryana, India

– Parul & Parmesh Kumar, Pp. 23996–24008

Studies on the response of House Sparrow *Passer domesticus* to artificial nest-boxes in rural Arakkonam and Nemili taluks, Vellore District, Tamil Nadu, India

– M. Pandian, Pp. 24009–24015

Threat assessment and conservation challenges for the herpetofaunal diversity of Dampa Tiger Reserve, Mizoram, India

– Sushanto Gouda, Ht. Decemson, Zoramkhuma, Fanai Malsawmdawngliana, Lal Biakzuala & Hmar Tlawmte Lalremsanga, Pp. 24016–24031

Taxonomy and conservation status of swamp eels (Synbranchiformes: Synbranchidae) of West Bengal, India

– Ram Krishna Das, Pp. 24032–24042

Sacred river of Pune: boon or bane for the diversity of aquatic beetles (Insecta: Coleoptera)

– Rita Deb, Pallavi Takawane & K.A Subramanian, Pp. 24043–24053

Fine structure of sensilla on the proboscis of the Indian Honey Bee *Apis cerana indica* Fabricius (Insecta: Hymenoptera: Apidae)

– A.G. Suhas Krishna, Shamprasad Varija Raghu & Rajashekhar K. Patil, Pp. 24054–24062

A compendium of *Aphelenchoides* (Fischer, 1894) (Nematoda: Tylenchida: Aphelenchoidea) nematodes with the description of a new species from Manipur, India

– Loukrakpam Bina Chanu & Naorem Mohilal, Pp. 24063–24078

Efficacy of levamisole and oxclozanide treatment on gastrointestinal nematodes of ungulates at the Central Zoo, Nepal

– Pratik Kiju, Amir Sadaula, Parbat Jung Thapa & Chiranjibi Prasad Pokheral, Pp. 24079–24085

Ocimum gratissimum L. ssp. *gratissimum* var. *macrophyllum* Briq. (Lamiaceae: Nepetoideae: Ocimeae) a new record from northeastern India

– Mamita Kalita, Nilakshee Devi & Diganta Narzary, Pp. 24086–24091

The study of biogeographic patterns of the genus *Parmotrema* in Wayanad District, Kerala with a new record in India

– Bibin Joseph, Edathum Thazhekuni Sinisha, Valiya Thodiyil Jaseela, Harshid Pulparambil & Nediyaarambu Sukumaran Pradeep, Pp. 24092–24103

Review

Diversity of Calliphoridae and Polleniidae (Diptera) in the Himalaya, India

– Meenakshi Bharti, Pp. 24104–24115

Short Communications

First photographic evidence of mangle manifestation in Panna Tiger Reserve, India

– Supratim Dutta & Krishnamurthy Ramesh, Pp. 24116–24119

New locality record of Forest Spotted Gecko *Cyrtodactylus (Geckoella) cf. speciosus* (Beddome, 1870) (Reptilia: Squamata: Gekkonidae) from Thanjavur, in the eastern coastal plains of Tamil Nadu, India

– Gopal Murali, Pp. 24120–24124

Preliminary observations of moth (Lepidoptera) fauna of Purna Wildlife Sanctuary, Gujarat, India

– Preeti Choudhary & Indu Sharma, Pp. 24125–24130

On the occurrence of *Audouinella chalybea* (Roth) Bory, 1823, a rare freshwater red algae (Florideophyceae: Acrochaetiales: Audouinellaceae) from eastern Himalaya, India

– Jai Prakash Keshri & Jay Mal, Pp. 24131–24134

Addition of four invasive alien plant species to state flora of Mizoram, India

– Lal Tlanhlu, Margaret Lalhlupuii, Sanatombi Devi Yumkham & Sandhyarani Devi Khomdram, Pp. 24135–24139

Notes

First sighting record of Western Reef-Heron *Egretta gularis* (Bosc, 1792) (Aves: Pelecaniformes: Ardeidae) from Jammu & Kashmir, India

– Parvaiz Yousuf, Semran Parvaiz, Nisheet Zehbi, Sabia Altaf, Showkat Maqbool, & Mudasir Mehmood Malik, Pp. 24140–24143

Rare desmid genus *Bourrellyodesmus* Compère (Chlorophyceae: Desmidiaceae) in India with description of a new species (*Bourrellyodesmus indicus* Das & Keshri sp. nov.) from eastern Himalaya, India

– Debjyoti Das & Jai Prakash Keshri, Pp. 24144–24147

Threats faced by *Humboldtia bourdillonii* Prain (Magnoliopsida: Fabales: Fabaceae), an endangered tree endemic to the southern Western Ghats, India

– Jithu K. Jose & K. Anuraj, Pp. 24148–24150

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