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Cover: A bag worm with its beautiful heap of junk. Acrylics on 300 GSM paper by Dupati Poojitha based on a picture by Sanjay Molur.



New distribution record of *Korthalsia rogersii* Becc, a threatened endemic climbing palm of Andaman archipelago

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Sunda shelf holds a large number of palm species, also embraces a significant diversity of climbing palms (rattans) of the subfamily Calamoideae, which comprise eight genera (Baker et al. 2000; Vorontsova et al. 2016). Among these, the unique and conspicuous genus *Korthalsia* Blume (Arecaceae: Calamoideae: Calameae) has diversified with 28 species in the perhumid areas of Andaman & Nicobar Islands to New Guinea (Dransfield 1981). The Andaman archipelago harbors only two species of *Korthalsia*, the widespread *K. laciniosa* and the endemic species *K. rogersii* (Figure 1). The rest of the species are distributed across the Malesia region (Manohara et al. 2010; Shahimi 2018). Beccari (1918) used the type specimens of *K. rogersii* collected by C.G. Rogers from the South Andaman Islands in 1904 to describe the species; based on this specimen, Brandis (1906) also indicated the presence of the species in Andaman Island (Dransfield 1981; Mathew et al. 2007). Initially, the species was thought to be a miniature form of *K. laciniosa*. However, unique morphological characteristics of the species such

as unarmed leaf sheath, ocrea, slender & tomentous rachilla and comparatively larger fruit size make the species morphologically more distinct from *K. laciniosa* and closer to *K. concolor*, a native species in Sabah, northern Borneo (Dransfield 1981). However, identification of the specimen of *K. rogersii* used for the study is provisional, the species has been found closer to *K. lanceolata* in the recent molecular systematics & evolutionary analysis (Shahimi 2018). A century after its initial collection, the species was again reported from Chidiyatapu, South Andaman in 1993 as part of the Flora India project. Further, living specimens of the species were relocated to the Jawaharlal Nehru Tropical Botanic Garden and Research Institute (JNTBGRI) and Kerala Forest Research Institute, Kerala, India, from its original location. Even though the species description was provided by Beccari (1918), Basu (1992); and Renuka & Vijayakumar (1995), it was based on the infertile specimen including rachilla. Renuka & Vijayakumar (1995) also reported that the species is differentiated from *K. laciniosa*. A description on the floral characteristics of the

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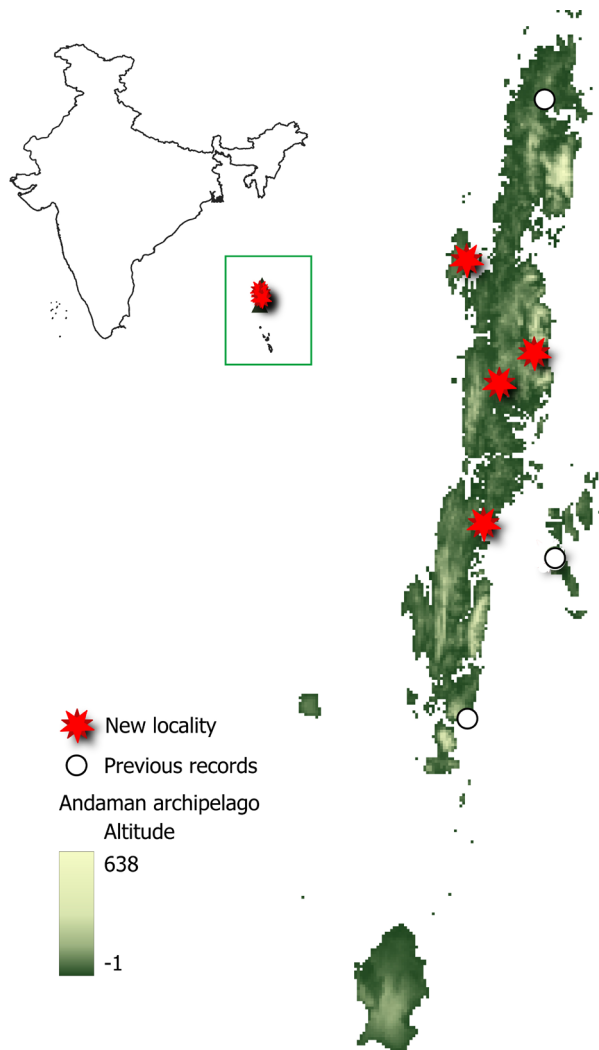


Figure 1. Map of Andaman Archipelago showing the distribution points of *Korthalsia rogersii*.

relocated living specimen flowered at JNTBGRI originally collected from Burmanallah, South Andaman were given by Mathew et al. (2007). Initially, the species was thought to be confined to Diglipur population, North Andaman, Havelock and Burmanallah/Chidiya Tapu, South Andaman population (Renuka & Vijayakumar 1995; Mathew et al. 2007; Manohara et al. 2010). However, the present study revealed four newly explored populations of the species spanning from North Andaman to South Andaman based on an expedition carried out across the Andaman Islands during 2022 (Figure 1).

The field survey was carried out across seven forest divisions covering the five major islands of Andaman and Ritchie's archipelago. The populations of *K. rogersii* were identified from seven locations including the previously known locality (Table 1, Figure 1). The identity of the species is confirmed by following the general characteristics of the



Image 1. *Korthalsia rogersii* from Interview Island. © Sarath P.



Image 2. Seedling recruitment of *Korthalsia rogersii* from Interview Island. © Sarath P.



Image 3. Seedling recruitment of *Korthalsia rogersii* observed from Chidiya Tapu. © Sarath P.

species (Box 1) and taxonomic key reported to differentiate the rattan species in Andaman & Nicobar Islands (Renuka & Vijayakumar 1995). The individuals encountered during the survey were restricted to fewer than 25 individuals in the majority of the populations. However, the populations

Table 1. Locality records of *Korthalsia rogersii* from the Andaman archipelago.

Forest division	Island & Location	GPS	No. individuals
Diglipur	Radhanagar, North Andaman	13.3796 N, 92.9476 E	<20
Mayabunder	Interview Island	12.8969 N, 92.7130 E	>35
Middle Andaman	Beetapur	12.6169 N, 92.9161 E	<20
	Bakultala	12.5249 N, 92.8114 E	
Baratang	Baratang Island	12.1028 N, 92.7641 E	<25
Havelock	Havelock Island, Ritchie's Archipelago	12.0111 N, 92.9578 E	<30
South Andaman	Chidiya Tapu	11.51643 N, 92.7154 E	>40

at Chidiya Tapu and Interview Island were exceptions, where more than 30 individuals were recorded (Image 1). Most populations are distributed in evergreen and riparian habitats, with the species co-occurring alongside *K. laciniosa*, occupying a similar niche, except for the populations at Chidiya Tapu and Interview Island.

Consequently, we extended our survey to other areas where *K. laciniosa* is distributed (Saddle Peak, North Andaman; Prembukbay, Middle Andaman; Mount Harriet, Wandoor & Rutland Island, South Andaman; Little Andaman; Sir William Peel Island & Henry Lawrence Island, Ritchie's archipelago), but we were unable to find *K. rogersii* in these areas. Though a population of the species has been located on Havelock Island in the Ritchie's archipelago, we could not find the species in the nearby larger islands (Sir William Peel and Henry Lawrence Islands) of the archipelago. During our field visit in the months of April–May, we did not encounter any flowering/seed-bearing individuals, however, seedling recruitment was observed solely in Chidiya Tapu and Interview Islands (Images 2 & 3). It is noteworthy that despite the co-occurrence of *K. rogersii* and *K. laciniosa* in most populations, increased population size & seedling recruitment were evident in Chidiya Tapu and Interview Island populations, where *K. laciniosa* is notably absent. Furthermore, it would be intriguing to explore the impact of fragmented distribution of the species, along with its restricted population size and barriers to dispersal induced by the insular habitat, on gene flow and genetic structure of populations. This investigation holds significant implications for conservation of the species, which is further threatened by the extraction of canes.

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Box 1. General description of the species based on Odoardo Beccari (1918); Basu et al. (1992); Renuka & Vijayakumar (1995) and Mathew et al. (2007).

Climbing aerially branching rattan with clustered, slender stem (0.7 cm in diameter), hapaxanthic, and hermaphroditic flowers. Pinnate leaves up to 1 m long with light green unarmed leaf sheath. Lower stem diameter & leaf size and absence of knee in the nodes. Ocrea is tightly sheathed without domatia. 15 cm long petiole armed below with 2 rows of recurved spines and with short cirrus. 13 x 6.5 cm cuneate-rhomboid, unevenly serrated, equidistant leaflets. Inflorescence 0.5 m long, with truncated secondary sheath and a tubular unarmed primary sheath. Inflorescence contains up to 3–5 cm long five rachillae. Flowers gamosepalous, broadly oval, and have a cup-shaped calyx with three (2 x 1) light brown sepals, and three fleshy boat-shaped petals (5 x 1 mm). Stamens 6, 3 + 3 dehiscent abaxially and slightly inflexed toward the center. Tricarpellary with a pyramidal stigma and short style. Oblong fruits with a persistent calyx and stigma. Flowering time in September–November and fruiting in March–August

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