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continued on the back inside cover

Cover: A mesmerising Indian Luna moth *Actias selene* is dancing through the starry night (by Vincent van Gogh) moonlit sky, displaying its ballistic display of feather tail.
Digital artwork by Vyshnavee Sneha Jaijar.



the natural population of the species in India (Pownitha et al. 2022).

The species is reported to be vulnerable in the Western Ghats of Tamil Nadu and Karnataka states of India and at lower risk in Kerala State (Ravikumar et al. 2000).

Prior research on *E. ribes* documented the ethnomedicinal and medicinal properties of the species from various states of the country, with no distributional record from Manipur state (Roy & Pramanik 2020; Pownitha et al. 2022). Agrawala et al. (2023) recorded this species distribution in Manipur, but the exact locality was not mentioned. During a recent ethnobotanical field expedition in Langol Reserve Forest area of Manipur, the team encountered three individuals of the plant in flowering and fruiting stages. After proper morpho-taxonomic investigation, the plant was identified as *E. ribes*. Details on taxonomic treatment, photographic illustration, and gastronomic uses of the species is provided here (see Image 1).

TAXONOMIC TREATMENT

Embelia ribes Burm.f., Fl. Ind. 62, t. 23. 1768; C.B. Clarke in Hook.f., Fl. Brit. India 3: 513. 1882; Kanjilal et al., Fl. Assam 3: 169. 1939; Prain, Bengal Pl. 1: 643. 1903; A.S. Chauhan in Hajra, Contrib. Fl. Namdapha 211. 1996; Chowdhery et al. in Giri et al., Fl. Arunachal Pradesh, 2: 119. 2008; Dash & Singh, Fl. Kurung Kumey 543. 2017; Mao et al., Checkl. Fl. Nagaland: 7. 2017; R. Roy & A. Pramanik in S.S. Dash & A.A. Mao, Flow. Pl. India Annot. Checkl. Dicot. 2: 52. 2020; Agrawala et al. in A.A. Mao & P.K. Mukherjee, Fl. Manipur Pict. Guide: 269. 2023. *Antidesma ribes* (Burm.f.) Raeusch. in Nomencl. Bot. Pl. Illustr., ed. 3: 287. 1797. *Embelia sessiliflora* (Burm.f.) Kurz, J. Asiat. Soc. Bengal, Pt. 2, Nat. Hist. 40: 66. 1871. *Samara ribes* (Burm.f.) Benth. & Hook.f. ex. Kurz, in J. Asiat. Soc. Bengal, Pt. 2, Nat. Hist. 46: 222. 1877. *Ribesiodes ribes* (Burm.f.) Kuntze, Revis. Gen. Pl. 2: 403. 1891.

Description: Medium sized liana spreading 5 m long or even more. Stem woody, ridged, branchlets flexuous, not armed, rusty tomentose. Leaves simple, alternate; lamina elliptic or narrowly obovate, 5.5–6.5 × 2.8–3.5

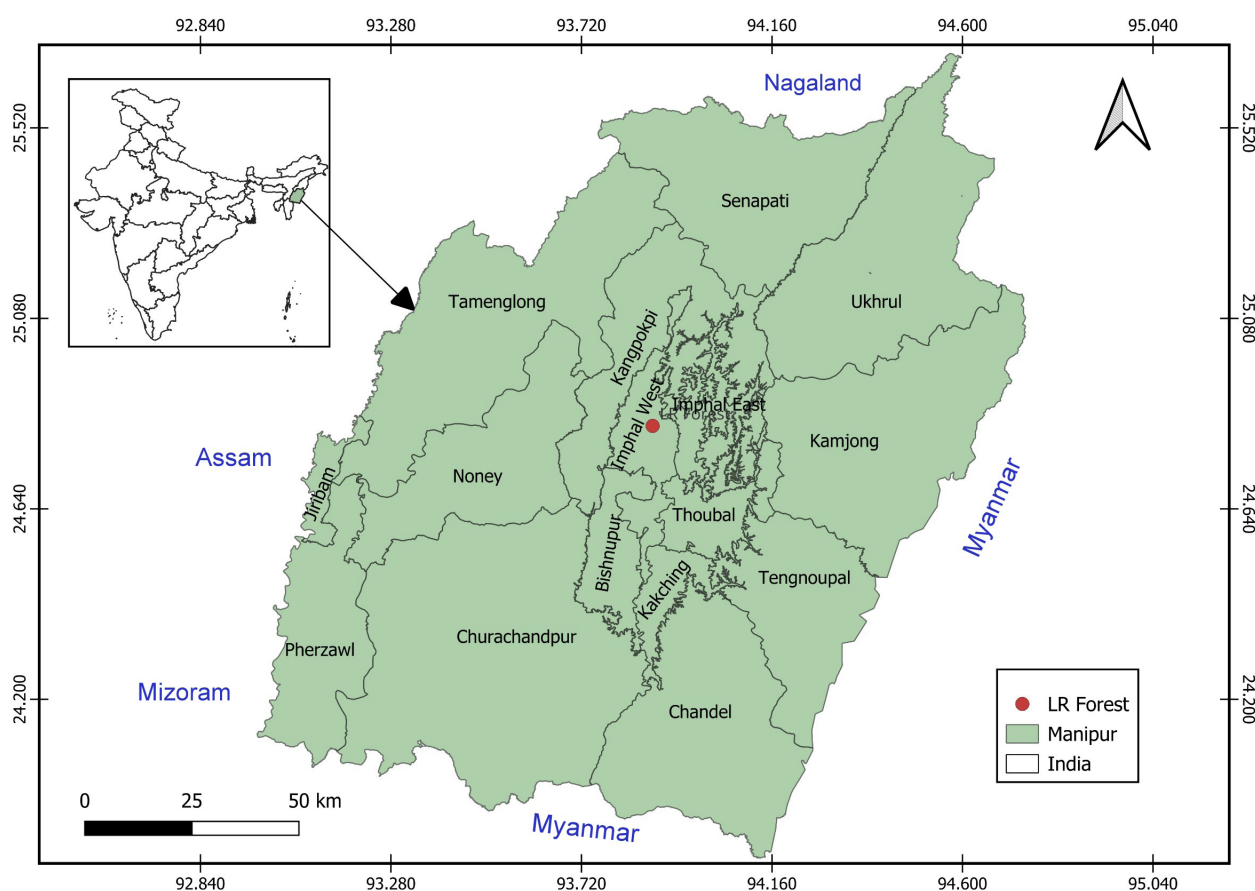


Figure 1. Study site showing distribution of *Embelia ribes* in Langol Reserve Forest, Manipur.



Image 1. *Embelia ribes*: A—Plant in natural habitat | B—Fruiting twig | C & D—Leaves Adaxial and Abaxial view | E—Twig with inflorescence | F—Flower | G & H—Stamens (5, epipetalous). © Robert Panmei.

cm, apex acuminate, base cuneate or rounded, margin entire, revolute, chartaceous to coriaceous, glabrous on both surfaces; petioles narrowly winged to base, 0.8–1 cm long. Inflorescences pinnately pyramidal panicles, terminal, rachis 12–20 cm, puberulent; bracts subulate, sparsely puberulent, black punctate-lineate. Flowers small, greenish-white, pedicels 0.2–0.25 cm long,

sparsely to densely puberulent. Sepals five, deltate, pellucid punctate, glandular ciliate adaxially and on margin, apex acuminate. Petals five, free, elliptic or oblong, chartaceous, punctate, densely glandular inside and along margin, apex acute to obtuse. Stamens five, slightly exserted, epipetalous, anthers ovate, connective black punctate. Ovary ovoid, glabrous, stigma capitate.

Fruits deep reddish, globose or ovoid, ca. 0.3–0.5 cm in diam., smooth.

Flowering & Fruiting: April–June.

Habitat: Growing along the road side in Langol Reserve Forest (24.831° N, 93.884° E), Elevation 817 m (Figure 1).

Specimen examined: Manipur, Imphal, Langol Reserved Forest, RP-98 (Manipur University), dated 27.iv.2024.

Distribution: India (Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Goa, Karnataka, Kerala, Maharashtra, Meghalaya, Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim, and Tamil Nadu). Bangladesh, Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Sulawesi, Thailand, Tibet, and Vietnam.

Ethnobotanical notes: The species is locally known as 'Jubabungnui' or 'Jukuibungnui' by the Rongmei tribe of Manipur. The leaves are utilized as a vegetable, with mature leaves being favoured over younger ones. The mature leaves are generally cooked with Rice Bean *Vigna umbellata* (Thunb.) (Ohwi & Ohashi), taro or potato. It is believed that consuming these cooked leaves enhances overall vitality among the Rongmei tribe. Till date, there have been no documented culinary applications of this species in India. The study presents the first recorded gastronomic use of the species from the state of Manipur.

Future studies on nutritional value and conservation initiative by the competent authority could promote the usage and sustainable utilization of the species.

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Articles

Inventory of traditional medicinal plants and ethnobotanical knowledge from Hassan District, Karnataka, India

– Kushavara Venkatesh Amara, Gotravalli Manjunatha Prashanth Kumar & Rajkumar Hanumanthrao Garampalli, Pp. 27035–27063

An annotated checklist of lianas in Manipur, India

– Longjam Malemnganbee Chanu & Debjyoti Bhattacharyya, Pp. 27064–27074

New records and typification in family Poaceae from western Himalaya, India

– Smita Tiwari, Dileshwar Prasad, Sangam Sharma, Supriya Tiwari & Priyanka Agnihotri, Pp. 27075–27086

Collection and lipid analysis of marine unialgal cyanobacteria: a case study from the southeastern coast of India

– Selvam Selvapriya & Sundaram Rajakumar, Pp. 27087–27097

Range expansion of Indian Grey Hornbill population: a case study based on land use, land cover, and vegetation changes in Vadodara, Gujarat, India

– Parikshit Dhaduk & Geeta Padate, Pp. 27098–27109

Communications

A pioneer study of orchids on Nusa Barung Island of Indonesia

– Toni Artaka, Bina Swasta Sitepu, Fajar Dwi Nur Aji, Suryadi & Tri Atmoko, Pp. 27110–27115

A bibliometric visualization of trends in Philippine sharks studies published in Scopus-indexed journals over the past five decades

– Merfat Ampong Sali, Najeeb Razul Ampong Sali, Araniza M. Diansuy, Anina Haslee A. Julkanain-Ong & Richard Nami Muallil, Pp. 27116–27124

First camera-trap evidence of Dhole *Cuon alpinus* Pallas, 1811 (Carnivora: Canidae) from the Kaziranga-Karbi Anglong landscape, Assam, India

– Mujahid Ahamad, Jyotish Ranjan Deka, Priyanka Borah, Umar Saeed, Ruchi Badola & Syed Ainul Hussain, Pp. 27125–27130

Distribution, habitat use and conservation status of Smooth-coated Otter *Lutrogale perspicillata* along the Cauvery and Kabini rivers, Karnataka, India

– Allison Amavisca, Raghunath Belur & Sugandhi Gadadhar, Pp. 27131–27140

Review

An annotated checklist of the genus *Amorphophallus* Blume ex Decne. (Araceae): an update on the distribution and conservation status of its species

– Norilyn Fontarum-Bulawin, Michael A. Calaramo & Grecebio Jonathan D. Alejandro, Pp. 27141–27158

Short Communications

Embelia ribes Burm.f. (Primulaceae) – an ayurvedic plant with ethnobotanical notes from Manipur, India

– Robert Panmei, Soyala Kashung, Lanrili Dangmei, Akoijam Surviya & Ungpemmi Ningshen, Pp. 27159–27162

First record of marine isopod *Synidotea variegata* (Collinge, 1917), (Crustacea: Isopoda: Valvifera) from the Gulf of Kutch, Gujarat, northwestern coast of India

– Deep D. Dudiya, Mansi S. Goswami & Pranav J. Pandya, Pp. 27163–27166

Lesser Blue-wing *Rhyothemis triangularis* Kirby, 1889 (Insecta: Libellulidae), a new addition to the dragonfly diversity of Rajasthan, India

– Anil Sarsavan, Manohar Pawar, Satish Kumar Sharma & Vinod Paliwal, Pp. 27167–27170

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