Encyclia altissima (Orchidaceae) new for Cuba

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Novitiae florae cubensis No. 8

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Abstract

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Encyclia altissima, so far known from the Bahamas, the Turks and Caicos Islands and Haiti, is recorded for Cuba from the Sierra de Mariana, Guantánamo province. For the Cuban population, a description and illustration, distribution data and conservation status are given.

During an expedition along the south coast of the province of Guantánamo a non-flowering orchid species was found by the authors, which could not then be identified. Pseudobulbs were taken into cultivation and brought to flower (Fig. 1). In flower, the plants could be identified with the help of Correll & Correll (1996) and Withner (1966, 1996) as *Encyclia altissima* (Bateman ex Lindl.) Schltr. [Syn.: *E. hodgeana* (Hawkes) Beckner], a species hitherto known only from the Bahamas, the Turks and Caicos Islands and Haiti (Correll & Correll 1996, Withner 1996).

Description of the Cuban plants. – Perennial, flowering up to 1.5 m tall, roots white, 3 mm in diameter, pseudobulbs up to 33 cm long and 3 cm thick, with 10-15 cm long imbricating sheaths. *Leaves* very coriaceous, linear to linear-lanceolate, 63-66 × 2.5 cm. *Inflorescence* terminal, 1.5 m long, with up to 30 flowers. *Sepals* 22 × 5 mm, elliptic, acute, greenish tan with reddish brown striping towards apex. *Petals* oblanceolate, somewhat narrower, otherwise similar. *Labellum* deeply 3-lobed, 22 × 20 mm wide; lateral lobes oblong, obtuse, erect, embracing the column, yellow with radiating purple lines, midlobe white with yellow undulating margin and radiating purple lines; two lateral erect callose keels joining at the midlobe, two undulate callose lamellae parallel the keels on the midlobe. *Column* elongate, white, streaked with purple, with membranaceous, incurved, rounded auricles 12 × 8 mm; *anther* 3 × 2 mm, yellow. Flowering: November to March.

Correll & Correll (1996) give the height of the plants with up to 210 cm, and the leaf length (but apparently due to a typographical error) with 6 cm; otherwise the Cuban plants match perfectly the description of plants from the other areas.

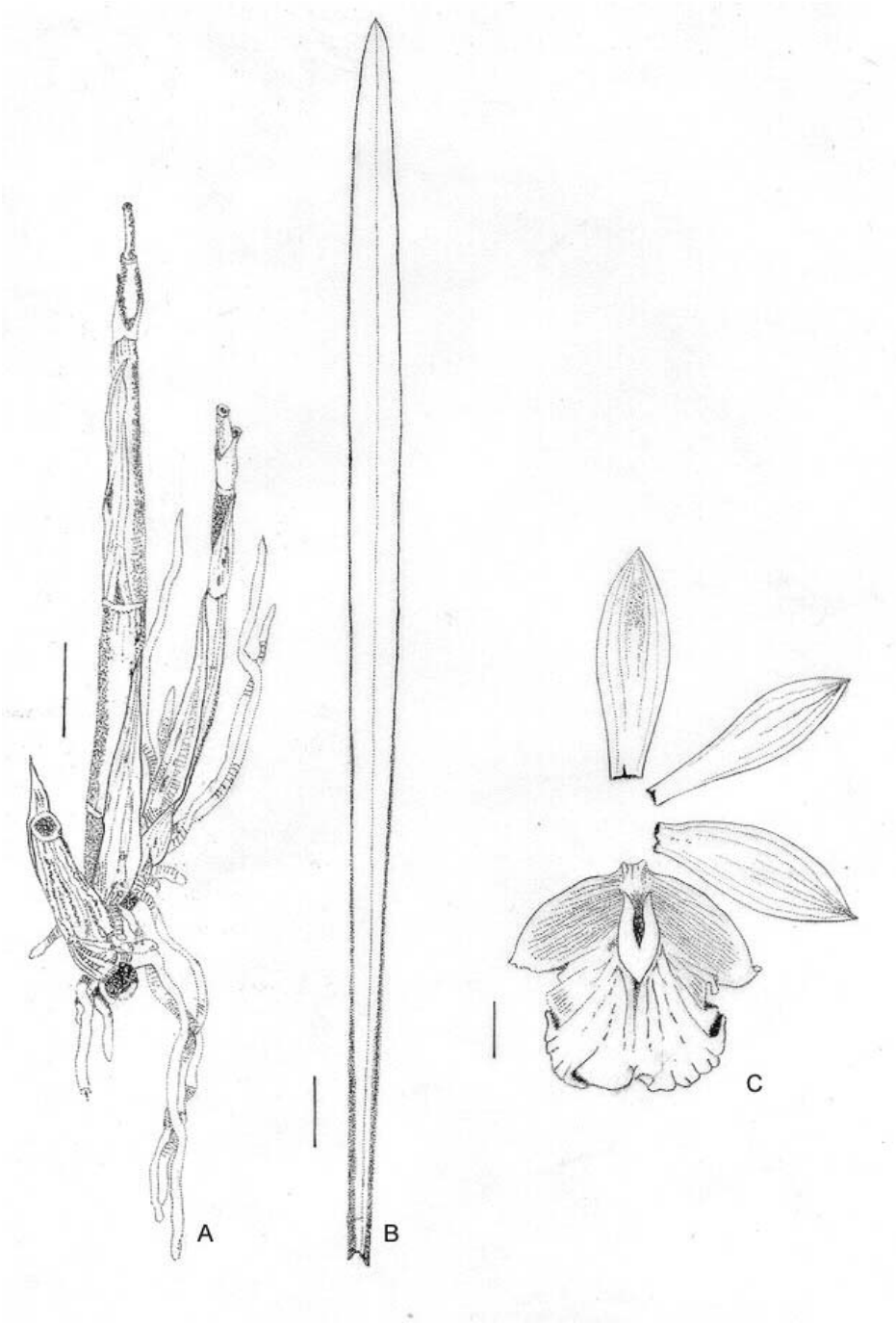

Fig. 1. *Encyclia altissima* – A: pseudobulb; B: leaf; C: flower. – Scale bar: A-B = 3 cm, C = 1 cm; drawn by Walfrido Lago based on *Martínez & Fagilde 20631* from BSC.

Distribution in Cuba. – *Encyclia altissima* is known so far only from the Guantánamo province, where it is found in the Sierra de Mariana, c. 5.5 km from Baitiquirí, in a microphyllous, semideciduous forest, near a gypsum mine, c. 400 m above sea level. – Specimen: *Martínez & Fagilde 20631* (BSC).

Conservation status. – Because of the localized distribution in an area close to settlements and strongly affected by human activities, we suggest for *Encyclia altissima* in Cuba the status Critically Endangered (CR), according to the criteria A2c and C2b of the Conservation Assessment and Management Plan (CAMP) I for Cuban forest plants (Peña & al. 1998).

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