

**POTHOS THOMSONIANUS SCHOTT (ARACEAE) : AN
ADDITION TO THE ANGIOSPERM FLORA OF
PARAMBIKULAM WILDLIFE SANCTUARY, KERALA,
INDIA**

A.J. ROBI, MAGESH. G & A.R.R. MENON*

Kerala Forest Research Institute, Peechi – 680 653, Thrissur, Kerala

*E - mail: arrmenon@kfri.org

ABSTRACT

Pothos thomsonianus Schott is a climber, threatened and endemic to Southern Western Ghats of Peninsular India. The present report is the first distributional record of this endemic taxon from Orukomban range in Parambikulam Wildlife Sanctuary, Palakkad District. It is a rare plant, occurs in evergreen forests. Formerly this species has been reported only from Idukki and Thiruvananthapuram Districts of Kerala. The species assumes to have a wider distribution beyond its known distribution. Specimens deposited in the herbarium of Botany Department, KFRI, Peechi, Kerala.

INTRODUCTION

The family Araceae is a monocotyledonous flowering family having rhizomatous or tuberous herbs in which flowers are born on a type of inflorescence called a spadix. The spadix is usually accompanied by and sometimes partially enclosed in a spathe or leaf-like hood. It comprises 110 genera and 1800 species. The genus *Pothos* L. is an evergreen climbing herb with adhesive adventitious roots and has a total of 55 species in the World, of which 5 species are distributed in Kerala. Of these, *Pothos scandens* L. is common but the other three species like *P. armatus* C.E.C. Fisch., *P. thomsonianus* Schott, *P. crassipedunculatus* Sivad. & N. Mohanan belong to RET category. Formerly, this species has been reported only from two districts of Kerala, Idukki and Thiruvananthapuram. (Sasidharan, 2004).

The Southern Western Ghats of India has been recognized as one of the earth's biologically 'hot spot'. The region is enriched with rare, endangered and

threatened species. It consists of National Parks, Wildlife Sanctuaries and Reserve Forests etc, which are identified as the storehouses of valuable gene pool. Within Southern Western Ghats, Kerala is very rich in biological diversity. At present, total number of five National Parks, fourteen Wildlife Sanctuaries and a Kurinjimala Sanctuary exist in the State. Of these, two areas have also been designated as Biosphere Reserves.

The present report is the first distributional record of this endemic taxon from Orukomban range in Parambikulam Wildlife Sanctuary. The species assumes to have a wider distribution beyond its known distributional areas.

Pothos thomsonianus Schott, Aroideae 24. t. 51. 1853; Hook. f. Fl. Brit. India 6: 555. 1893; Gamble, Fl. Madras 1592 (1110). 1931; M. Mohanan & Henry, Fl. Thiruvananthapuram

498. 1994; Sasidh. Fl. Periyar Tiger Reserve 4776. 1998; Mohanan & Sivad. Fl. Agasthyamala 761. 2002.

Climber; stems rigid, glabrous. Leaves to 20 x 4.5 cm, elliptic – oblong, acuminate at apex, obtusely acute at base; lateral nerves many, regular, parallel, commissural veins nearly marginal; petiole 1.5-2 cm long, channelled. Spadix on short lateral branches; peduncle solitary, 4-5 cm long, stout; spathe 1.5 x 0.6 cm, ovate-oblong, obtuse, mucronate; spadix 18 x 4 mm, cylindrical, uniform (Fig 2 a&b, 3). Flowers compactly packed; bracts minute. Stamens 6. Ovary ovoid, stigma hexagonal. Fruit 6 x 5 mm, obovoid, black.

Fl. & Fr.: Jan. – May

Distribution: Southern Western Ghats: This species has been ranked as 'threatened. (Nayar, 1997)

Ecology: It grows at an altitude between 500 – 1200 msl.

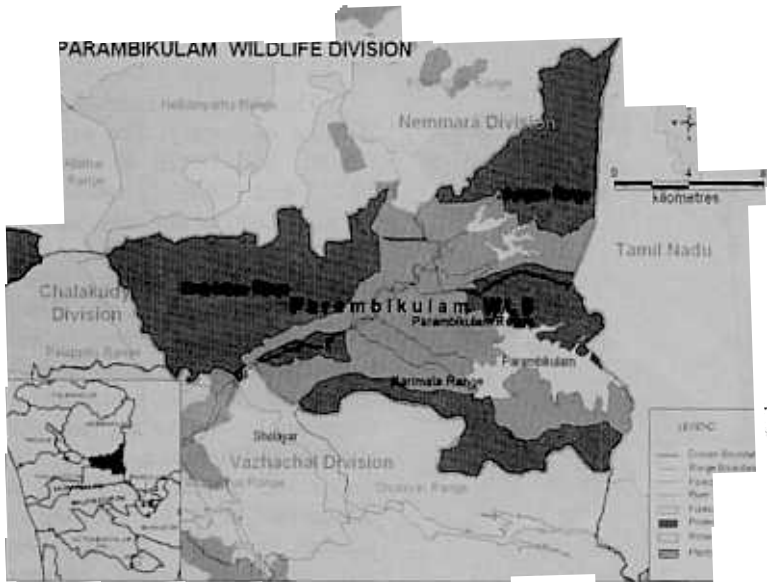


Fig. 1. Study area map



Fig. 2a.



Fig. 3. Inflorescence axis with fruits of
P. thomsonianus Schott.



Fig. 2a & b. Herbarium sheet of *P. thomsonianus* Schott collected from Parambikular WLS.

NOTES

The study was carried out at Parambikulam Wildlife Sanctuary. The sanctuary lies between $76^{\circ} 35'$ and $76^{\circ} 50'$ E longitude and between $10^{\circ} 20'$ and $10^{\circ} 32'$ N latitude in the Palakkad Revenue District of Kerala and has an area of 272 km² (Fig. 1). The area has the administrative Wild life Division status under the Olavakkode circle of Kerala Forest Department and is constituted in four forest ranges, viz., Sungam, Parambikulam, Karimala and Orukomban. It is the third largest protected area in Kerala (Sujanapal, 2005). As per Chandrasekharan (1962) and Champion & Seth (1968), the natural vegetation of the sanctuary can be broadly categorized in to the following types, West coast tropical evergreen forests, West coast tropical semi evergreen forests, Southern moist mixed deciduous forests and Southern dry mixed

deciduous forests. The precise location of the site was recorded using GPS.

Specimens were collected during flowering season and herbarium sheets were prepared after proper treatment. The identification was carried out by referring various literatures. The specimens deposited in the herbarium of Botany Department, KFRI Peechi, Kerala.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors are grateful to Dr. R. Gnanaharan, Director of KFRI for the facilities and encourages provided. We also express our gratitude to DBT for the financial assistance to study the vegetation. Also thankful to Dr. P. Sujanalpal for the identification of the specimen.

REFERENCES

- CHAMPION, H.G. & S.K. SETH 1968. *A Revised Survey of the Forest Types of India*. Govt. of India press, Delhi.
- CHANDRASEKHARA, C. 1962. Forest Types of Kerala State, Part I. *Indian For.* 88:660-674, 731-747, 837-847.
- NAYAR, M.P. 1997. Biodiversity challenges in Kerala & science of conservation biology. In Pushpangadan, P. & K.S.S. Nair (Eds.) *Biodiversity of Tropical Forests-the Kerala scenario*. STEC, Kerala, Trivandrum.
- SASIDHARAN, N. 2004. *Biodiversity documentation for Kerala, Part 6: Flowering plants*. KFRI Hand book No. 17. Kerala Forest Research Institute, Peechi.
- SUJANAPAL, P. 2005. *Vascular Flora of Parambikulam Wildlife Sanctuary*. Ph.D Thesis. University of Calicut, Calicut.