



Rediscovery of *Sonerila andamanensis* Stapf & King, 1900 (Melastomataceae)

The type collection of *Sonerila andamanensis* Stapf & King (in King, 1900) mentioned in the protologue (King's collector 48) from the Mt. Harriet Hills of South Andaman Island is presently not traceable at CAL and K. However, another specimen of this species collected from the Andaman Islands in 1884 also by King's collector is deposited at Kew with the barcode accession no K000867666. This specimen was annotated as *S. maculata* Roxburgh in 1975 by Panighrahi from the Botanical Survey of India. A perusal of literature and herbarium survey has revealed that *S. maculata* has not been reported from Andaman–Nicobar Islands (Lakshminarasimhan & Rao, 1996; Mathew, 1998; Pandey, & Diwakar, 2008; VasudevaRao, 1986), and no literature or any other valid documentation are available showing *S. andamanensis* is a synonym of *S. maculata* (Lakshminarasimhan *et. al.* 2011).

Sonerila andamanensis was thought to be extinct and known only from the protologue (King, 1900) and the one and only specimen deposited at Kew. In 1976 this species was relocated on Saddle Peak (732m), the highest point in Andaman–Nicobar Archipelago. During an exploration carried out by the first author of this document in 1989, a tiny population of this species was located at its type locality after a lapse of approximately over 100 years. Recent exploration on Andaman Islands carried out by the first author in 2012 resulted in the discovery of a population flowering in Mt Harriet National Park at an altitude of about 365m (Fig.1). Saddle Peak and Mount Harriet had already been declared as National Parks by the Andaman–Nicobar Forest Department and is a significant approach in the *in-situ* conservation of the species.



Figure 1: *Sonerila andamanensis*, two live specimens from Mt. Harriet, South Andaman.

Sonerila andamanensis Stapf & King, 1900

Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, 69 (1): 26, pl. 2. (1900).

Herbs 10–15 cm. Stem pubescent, pinkish–brown or greenish. **Leaves** 1.5–11.5 x 1–5.5 cm; petioles up to 5 cm, pubescent; blades ovate to elliptic–ovate or lanceolate, pubescent, acute or shortly acuminate at apex, cordate or oblique at base, ciliate at margin, dark green or pinkish green above, green or pinkish below; lateral nerves up to 9 pairs. **Flowers** in axillary or terminal helicoid cymes, pale white or pinkish, many flowered; calyx lobes *c.* 0.3 cm, broadly triangular; petals *c.* 0.5 cm, elliptic to elliptic–lanceolate, pinkish or pale white; stamens 3 with ovate–lanceolate, apically subacute anthers; style filiform *c.* 0.2 cm; stigma capitate. **Fruits** up to 1 x 0.3 cm, embedded in calyx tube, oblong with cuneate base.

Specimen examined: K20459; Mt. Harriet, South Andamans, India; S. P. Mathew 20459K; 13 December 1989.

Flowering & Fruiting: November to January

Acknowledgements

The first author would like to thank P. G. Latha (Director – JNTBGRI) for encouragements and

second author express his sincere thanks to Paranjit Singh (Director – BSI, Kolkata) for encouragements. The authors are also thankful to V. Sampathkumar (Indian Liaison Officer at Kew herbarium) for sharing herbarium details on this species at Kew. Finally we would like to thank James L. Reveal (Cornell University – USA) for editing the manuscript.

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Submitted: 12 March 2013, *Accepted:* 09 April 2013
Sectional Editor: James L. Reveal

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