



Rediscovery of *Aeginetia indica* L. (Orobanchaceae) from Meegahakiula, Sri Lanka after 125 years

Aeginetia indica L. (Orobanchaceae) is an herbaceous annual plant that lacks leaves and is parasitic on roots of monocots, especially grasses (Philcox, 1997). The species is rare and declining throughout its range. In Sri Lanka it has a Redlist status of CR (PE) or Critically Endangered Possibly Extinct (MOE, 2012) status. A small population of *Aeginetia indica* was discovered during botanical explorations while collecting and cataloguing plants in the village of Kalugahakandura, Meegahakivula District Secretariat Division of Badulla District, in December 2013. At that time, six mature individuals of *Aeginetia indica* were recorded in a small area approximately one square meter on a steep road-side forest floor (07°06'06.19"N, 81°04'58.63"E). Taxonomic identity was determined by comparison with specimens at the National Herbarium, Peradeniya, Sri Lanka, by submitting a voucher specimen (Reference No. 6/01/H/03) to the National Herbarium.



Figure 1: Habit and habitat of *Aeginetia indica* L.

According to available literature and consultation with herbarium personnel, the species has been collected previously from three districts in Sri Lanka: Kegalla, Kandy, and Moneragala. All collections were made between 1882 and 1888 (Kegalla, Nov 1886; Galagedara Oct 1882; and between Bibile and Nilgala, Jan 1888). The present site represents not only a rediscovery of *Aeginetia indica* L. (Figs.1–2) after a lapse of 125 years, but also a new locality for the plant some 30 km west of the site recorded from between Bibile and Nilgala in the Moneragala District in January of 1888.

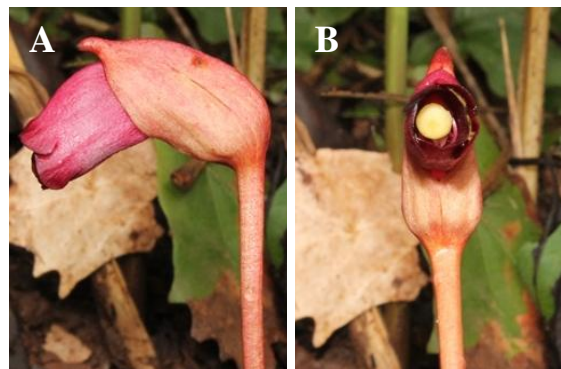


Figure 2: *Aeginetia indica* L. flower, A, side view; B, front view.

Aeginetia indica L., Sp. Pl. 632. 1753

Lectotype “Tsjem-cumulu,” in Rheede, *Hort. Malab.* 11: 97, t. 47. 1692, designated by Parnell, *Thai Forest Bull., Bot.* 29: 73. 2001.

Plant 15–30 (–40) cm tall, erect, 1–several arising from a fleshy rhizome of interwoven roots, slender, glabrous, naked except for a few scales at base. **Flowers** solitary, ebracteate, terminating scape, large, purple or purplish-red, nodding; calyx 1.5–3.75 cm long, closed in bud, acute, glabrous, pale yellow to pinkish; corolla 2.5–5 cm long with limb ca. 2 cm wide, fimbriate marginally. **Anthers** with spurs of lower pair blunt, thickened. **Capsule** ca. 1.5 cm long, ovoid, beaked, enclosed in a persistent

calyx and corolla. **Seeds** numerous, yellowish-white.

Specimens examined. Sri Lanka. Kegalle District: Kegalle, Nov 1886, *W. Ferguson s.n.* (PDA). Kandy District: Galagedara, Oct 1882, *s. coll. s.n.* (PDA); Weliwala, between Gampola and Peradeniya, 23 Aug 1887, *s. coll. s.n.* (PDA). Moneragala District: between Bibile and Nilgala, Jan 1888, *s. coll. s.n.* (PDA). Without locality: *J. Macrae 202* (BM); *G.H.K. Thwaites s.n.* (K).

Distribution: Widely dispersed in scattered locations in India, Burma, Peninsular Malaysia, Indonesia (Java), China, Japan, and the Philippines.

Ecology: In damp shade on forest floor.

During the present investigation, this parasitic plant species was located growing in a community of vascular plants comprising *Chromolaena odorata* (L.) R.M. King & H. Rob., *Eragrostis atrovirens* (Desf.) Trin., *Flueggea leucopyrus* Willd., *Helicteres isora* L., *Imperata cylindrica* (L.) P. Beauv., *Ischaemum rugosum* Salisb., *Lantana camara* L., *Mikania cordata* (Burm.f.) B.L. Rob., *Mimosa pudica* L., *Megathyrus maximus* (Jacq.) B.K. Simon & S.W.L. Jacobs, *Pterospermum suberifolium* (L.) Willd., *Sida acuta* Burm.f., *Stachytarpheta indica* (L.) Vahl, and *Vernonia cinerea* (L.) Less. This site is on a 40 degrees slope with highly eroded soil that has been strongly influenced by man over the years. There are visible traces of vegetation burning, clearing, and soil excavations in the recent past. Therefore, this small population requires immediate conservation consideration by the appropriate national and local authorities.

Acknowledgements

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Sectional Editor: James L. Reveal

S. P. Ekanayake¹, S. Jayarathne²,
S. Harischandra³, S. Karunarathne²,
B. Weerakoon², K. Mahagedara⁴,
A. Thudugala² & K. B. Ranawana²

¹ Ecological Association of Sri Lanka, 172, Bogahatenna, Uda Peradeniya, Peradeniya, Sri Lanka; Email: sekanayake@gmail.com

² Department of Zoology, University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka

³ Wildlife Research & Conservation Trust, New Digana Road, Kundasale, Kandy, Sri Lanka

⁴ Youth Nature Forum, P.O. Box 46, Peradeniya, Sri Lanka