

Occurrence of *Rhopalocnemis phalloides* Junghuhn (Balanophoraceae) in Neora Valley National Park, a new record for West Bengal, India

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Abstract

Rhopalocnemis phalloides Junghuhn (Balanophoraceae) has been collected from the Neora Valley National Park [27° 52' 03" N to 27° 07' 35" N and 80° 45' E to 80° 55' E], Darjeeling District, and is a new record of its occurrence for the State of West Bengal, India.

Key words: *Rhopalocnemis phalloides*, Neora Valley National Park, West Bengal, New Record

INTRODUCTION

During floristic exploration of the Neora Valley National Park [27° 52' 03" N to 27° 07' 35" N and 80° 45' E to 80° 55' E] in Darjeeling District of West Bengal, the authors found one interesting species of Balanophoraceae. Critical examination and consultation of relevant literatures and herbaria revealed that the specimen as *Rhopalocnemis phalloides* Junghuhn, and was hitherto never recorded earlier from West Bengal in India, nor was it treated in any of the literatures elsewhere pertaining to the flora of West Bengal.

Long time back, Hooker (1890) had reported the occurrence of this species from Eastern Nepal, Sikkim and Khasia Hills between 1500 – 2400 m (5000 – 8000 feet) amsl. Thereafter, in recent past, Hiroshi Hara (1966) collected this species from Sinduwa-Chitray (Nepal, 2100 m) and Bilbatay Bhanjang (Nepal, 2200 m). Hara *et al* (1982) have reported its distribution in Nepal, Sikkim, Assam and Indo-China. In the Flora of Bhutan, Grierson & Long (1983) have indicated the occurrence of this species in Sikkim in cool broad-leaved forests, between 2000 – 2500 m.

Survey of literature and herbaria revealed that the species was never before collected from the Indian state of West Bengal. So, the present record of *Rhopalocnemis phalloides* Junghuhn (Balanophoraceae) from the Neora Valley National park shows its extended distribution in the Darjeeling district of West Bengal.

TAXONOMIC TREATMENT

Rhopalocnemis phalloides Junghuhn, Nov. Ac t. Acad. Caes. Nat. Cur. 18, suppl. 1: 215. 1841; Trans. Linn. Soc. 22: 52, t. 12. 1856; Fl. Brit. India 5: 239. 1886; Pfl.-fam. ed. 2, 16 b:



Fig. 1. *Rhopalocnemis phalloides* Junghuhn (Balanophoraceae) in its natural habitat at Neora Valley National Park

323, f. 163 A-E. 1935; Fl. E. Him. 1: 66. 1966; Enum. Flower. Pl. Nep. 3: 193. 1982; Fl. Bhut. 1(1): 153. 1983. *Phaeocordylis areolata* Griffith in Trans. Linn. Soc. 20: 100, t. 8. 1851. [Fig. 1]

Herbaceous plant, 5 - 16.5 cm, dioecious, yellowish. Stem devoid of leaves, warted. Roots tuberous. Flowering heads 6 - 21.5 x 5.5 - 7 cm, cylindrical, surrounded with peltate scaly bracts. Flowers hairy. Male flowers: perianth tubular, irregularly lobed half length; stamens 3, fused into a column. Female Flowers: elongate, perianth shortly 2-lipped, adnate with ovary; styles 2, slender.

Flowering: July - September

Exsiccate: Jaributti Area, 2190 m. *AP Das & PC Rai 0211*, dated 16.06.1994 [NBU]

Distribution: Eastern Himalaya (Nepal, Sikkim, Darjeeling), Khasia, Assam, Indo-China & Malayan Islands.

Status: Extremely Rare. Just two clusters of the plant found only at Jaributti Area of Neora Valley National Park.

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