

A STUDY ON THE TREE LEGUMES ENDEMIC TO WESTERN GHATS OF KERALA

N.Gopalakrishnan Nair



KERALA FOREST RESEARCH INSTITUTE
PEECHI, THRISSUR

July 1991

Pages: 5

CONTENTS

| | Page | File |
|-----------------------|------|--------|
| Abstract | 1 | r.74.2 |
| 1 Introduction | 2 | r.74.3 |
| 2 Species enumeration | 2 | r.74.4 |
| 3 Discussion | 5 | r.74.5 |

ABSTRACT

A total of 12 species and one variety of leguminous trees endemic to the Western Ghats of Kerala and adjoining areas are enumerated in this report. They are *Acacia wightii*, *Calliandra cynometroides*, *Cynometra beddomei*, *C. bourdillonii*, *C. travancorica*, *Dialium travancoricum*, *Humboldtia bourdillonii*, *H. brunonis*, *H. decurrens*, *H. unijuga*, *H. unijuga* var. *trijuga*, *H. vahliana* and *Ormosia travancorica*. Brief notes on their distribution are also given.

1. INTRODUCTION

Taxa occurring in a restricted area, isolated by geographical or temporal barriers are designated endemics. The Western Ghats of Peninsular India have more than 3,500 species of flowering plants of which about 1,500 are endemics.

Among the vast assemblage of trees, the legumes deserve attention and an effort to relocate the endemic trees among them was done during the study. Field trips were conducted to different forest areas of Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Karantaka and as a result some of the rare and endemic leguminous trees could be relocated. A few of them are also grown in the Institute.

A list of the endemic tree legumes located during the present study along with notes on their occurrence is given in this report.

2. SPECIES ENUMERATION

Acacia wightii Baker

A small tree, closely allied to *Acacia arabica* having dark brown spines and glabrous leaflets, reported from Travancore-Tinnevely region of the Southern Western Ghats. The species is very rare and is in a threatened state at present.

***Calliandra cynmetroides* Bedd.**

A very rare tree reported from Rosemally in Trivandrum District in Kerala. Attempts to relocate it during the study was not successful.

***Cynometra beddomei* Prain**

A large tree with crimson young leaves and flowers in clusters. It is reported from Wynad and South Kanara portion the Western Ghats. The tree at present is in a rare and endangered state.

***Cynometra bourdillonii* Gamble**

Moderate sized trees with very attractive leaves. It is frequent near Bonacaud estate in Trivandrum District of Kerala. Seedlings collected from the forest thrive well at KFRI and has ornamental value.

***Cynometra travancorica* Bedd.**

Large trees with two leaflets for each compound leaf and with flat pods. The species could be located at Rosemally in Trivandrum District and at Pattikkad Range in Trichur District.

***Dialium travancoricum* Bourd.**

This lofty tree was relocated near Ponmudi in Trivandrum

District. Though flowering was profuse, fruiting was not observed and seedlings were not found.

Humboldtia bourdillonii Praln

Medium sized trees with pinkish white flowers and scarlet pods. Observed at Pooyamkutty in Malayattoor Forest Division of Central Kerala.

Humboldtia brunonis Wall.

A small tree found in the Western Ghats of Northern Kerala especially in Cannanore District.

Humboldtia decurrens Bedd.

A small tree, frequent in the forests of South Kerala, near water courses. It has very attractive leaves and is grown at KFRI.

Humboldtia unijuga Bedd.

Moderate sized trees with crimson flowers, common along the foothills of Agastyar Peak. Attempts made to grow the tree *ex situ* at Peechi was not successful.

Humboldtia unijuga Bedd. var. ***trijuga*** Joseph & Chandrab.

Small trees with three paired leaves and crimson flowers, found near Bonacaud estate in Trivandrum at the southern tip of

Western Ghats.

***Humboldtia vahliana* Wt**

Moderate sized trees with attractive flowers. common near river banks of the Western Ghats of central and southern Kerala.

***Ormosia travancorica* Bedd.**

Large trees with glossy leaves and scarlet seeds. Though rare, it is distributed almost throughout the Western Ghats of Kerala. The trees grows fairly fast.

3. DISCUSSION

The genus *Humboldtia* comprising of 6 species and one variety has only a single species common to Sri Lanka (*H.laurifolia*) and all other species are restricted to Western Ghats of India. Otherwise, this genus itself would have been ranked endemic to Western Ghats rather than Indo-Sri Lankan. Species like *Dialium travancoricum* has very narrow range of distribution and only a few trees could be located near Ponmudi. Fruits of the tree though described earlier, were not found during the past few years. Vegetative propagation can ensure the survival of some of these rare and endemic legume trees of the Western Ghats. It is also ideal, if an arboretum of the endemic trees of the legume family is established, thereby taking steps to conserve them *ex situ*.