

## ASCLEPIADACEAE

### THE *RIOCREUXIA FLANAGANII* COMPLEX: A REASSESSMENT

The *Riocreuxia flanaganii* complex [see R. A. Dyer in *Bothalia* 12,4: 632 (1979) and in *Fl. S. Afr.* 27,4: 87 (1980)] is reassessed in this note. Of the three subspecies, subsp. *woodii* is restored to specific rank, subsp. *alexandrina* is raised to specific rank and subsp. *segregata* is reduced to synonymy under *R.*

*burchellii*.

The revised relationship of the four previous subspecies is reflected in the following key. In all taxa the outer corona arises from above the base of the staminal column and the inner lobes reach as high as or higher than the staminal column.

- Outer corona-lobes small, not spreading, 2-toothed; peduncles 0–20 mm long; corolla 10–12(13) mm long; stems bifariously pubescent ..... 1. *R. flanaganii*
- Outer corona-lobes spreading or spreading-erect; peduncles usually 20 mm or more long; stems usually unifariously pubescent:
- Outer corona-lobes slender, spreading-erect, bifid, equal to or overtopping staminal column; corolla 8–10(12) mm long ..... 2. *R. alexandrina*
- Outer corona-lobes spreading, subtruncate or bifid; corolla (14)15–18 mm long:
- Inflorescence of (1)2 umbellate clusters of flowers; corolla  $\pm$  15 mm long; tube with globose base; outer corona-lobes  $\pm$  truncate ..... 3. *R. woodii*
- Inflorescence usually elongate, several-noded, rarely only (5) 20 mm long, few to several flowers from a node; corolla  $\pm$  17 mm long with slightly inflated base; outer corona lobes spreading, bifid ..... 4. *R. burchellii*

1. ***Riocreuxia flanaganii* Schltr.** in Bot. Jb. 18, Beibl. 45: 13 (1894); R.A. Dyer in Fl. S. Afr. 27,4: 87 (1980) in part excluding subspp. *woodii*, *segregata* and *alexandrina*.

It is recommended that the concept of this taxon should revert to that afforded it by the original author, Schlechter, and substantiated by N. E. Br. in Fl. Cap. 4,1: 804 (1908), with a distribution in the eastern Cape and southern Transkei.

2. ***Riocreuxia alexandrina* (Huber) R.A. Dyer**, stat. nov.

*Ceropegia flanaganii* Schltr. var. *alexandrina* Huber in Mems Soc. broteriana 12: 169 (1958). *Riocreuxia flanaganii* Schltr. subsp. *alexandrina* (Huber) R. A. Dyer in Bothalia 12: 632 (1979); in Fl. S. Afr. 27, 4: 88 (1980).

Perennial herb with a cluster of subfleshy roots. *Stems* twining, with scattered hairs or hairs in single row. *Leaves* broadly cordate at base, ovate-lanceolate, up to about 75 mm long, 50 mm broad, more or less hairy. *Peduncles* short or up to about 35 mm long, with rather dense, more or less terminal clusters of flowers. *Corolla* 8–10(12) mm long,  $\frac{1}{2}$ – $\frac{2}{3}$  divided; tube slightly inflated near base, 3–5 mm long; lobes 5–6 mm long, filiform, united at tips. *Staminal column* about 1 mm high. *Corona* arising about halfway up staminal column; outer lobes slender, spreading-erect, as high as or slightly higher than

staminal column; inner lobes oblong-erect, membranous, slightly higher than the staminal column.

Our knowledge of this species is based on specimens collected by *Rudatis* 1540 in southern Natal, inland from Port Shepstone, near Moyeni at about 700 m. Some specimens are associated with tall grassland. The species is notable for its small flowers, the corolla of which is divided to at least half to two-thirds of its length.

3. ***Riocreuxia woodii* N. E. Br.** in Fl. Cap. 4,1: 803 (1908).

*Riocreuxia flanaganii* Schltr. subsp. *woodii* (N. E. Br.) R. A. Dyer in Bothalia 12,4: 632 (1979); in Fl. S. Afr. 27,4: 87 (1980).

*Ceropegia flanaganii* Schltr. var. *fallax* Huber in Mems Soc. broteriana 12: 169 (1958).

This species is known only from the type specimen collected over 100 years ago by Medley Wood, near Inanda, inland from Durban. The locality falls within the distribution area of the variable species *Riocreuxia torulosa* Decne. and it requires careful observation of the coronal structure to distinguish the two species. Its association with *R. flanaganii* seems unwarranted and its resuscitation to specific rank is advocated.

4. ***Riocreuxia burchellii* K. Schum.** in Natürl. PflFam. 4,2: 273 (1895); R. A. Dyer in Fl. S. Afr. 27,4: 85 (1980).

*Riocreuxia flanaganii* Schltr. subsp. *segregata* R. A. Dyer in Bothalia 12,4: 632 (1979); in Fl. S. Afr. 27,4: 87 (1980).

Of the two known collections placed under *R. flanaganii* Schltr. subsp. *segregata*, the one, *Fitz-Simons & Van Dam* in TRV 25981 (PRE), was originally identified as *R. torulosa* Decne. and the other, *Pole Evans* 19656 was originally identified as *R. picta* Schltr. The abnormally short peduncles of these two cited specimens distracted attention from the third species with an overlapping distribution near Wakkerstroom, namely *R. burchellii* (= *R. polyantha*). The reassessment is that the two specimens in question represent an unusual growth form of *R. burchellii*.