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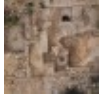
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Published: Dec 28th, 2012

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Biologists Discover Two New Orchid Species in Cuba

A team of biologists from the University of Vigo, Spain, and the Alejandro de Humboldt National Park in Cuba, has identified two new species of Caribbean orchids.



The newly discovered species, called *Encyclia navarroi* and *Tetramicra riparia*, belong to the orchid subtribe Laeliinae.

“The first species described, *Encyclia navarroi*, is an orchid with considerably large flowers. A year later we discovered the *Tetramicra riparia* species, with very small flowers. The latter is so named because it grows on the banks of stony streams in the mountains of Baracoa, one of the rainiest and least explored areas in Cuba,” said Dr Ángel Vale of the University of Vigo, lead author of two papers describing the discovered species in the journals *Systematic Botany* and *Annales Botanici Fennici*.

“Despite the fact that *Tetramicra riparia*’s flowers have a complete central petal, just like other species that make up a subgenre endemic to Cuba; the way they grow is very similar to a more widespread group that seems to have diverged on the neighboring island of Hispaniola.”

“Our work provides molecular evidence of the greater relationship of *Tetramicra riparia* with these species on the neighboring island. This is in consonance with the geological history of the Caribbean islands, according to which the eastern end of Cuba was in close contact with that land,” Dr Vale said.

The team is currently trying to estimate how many millions of years ago these and other Caribbean species saw the daylight. This will enable them to test whether the ancestor of this species was already in Cuba, or if on the

contrary, it evolved from an ancestor that colonized the island from neighboring archipelagos.

“Just as with most orchids, which offer no compensation to their pollinators, *Encyclia navarroi* and *Tetramicra riparia* receive very few visits from bees. This is one of the basic reasons that guarantee the survival of these plants, and also help protect the populations of their pollinators,” Dr Vale concluded.

Bibliographic information: Ángel Vale et al. 2012. A New Species of *Tetramicra* (Orchidaceae: Laeliinae) from Baracoa, Eastern Cuba. *Systematic Botany* 37(4): 883-892; doi: 10.1600/036364412X656491

Ángel Vale, Danny Rojas. 2012. *Encyclia navarroi* (Orchidaceae), a new species from Cuba. *Annales Botanici Fennici* 49: 83 – 86



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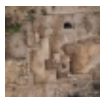
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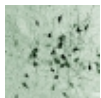
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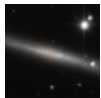
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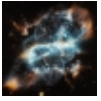
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