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LEPTOPUS SANJAPPAE (EUPHORBIACEAE), A NEW SPECIES FROM THE ANDAMAN ISLANDS, INDIA

R. SUMATHI, K. KARTHIGEYAN, J. JAYANTHI AND P. G. DIWAKAR
Botanical Survey of India, Andaman & Nicobar Circle, Port Blair - 744 102

During an exploratory survey in Saddle Peak National Park, North Andamans, a species of *Leptopus* Decne was collected. It is a small genus represented by 10 species distributed in tropical and subtropical regions (Radcliffe-Smith, 2001). So far, this genus has not been reported from Andaman and Nicobar Islands (Chakrabarty & Balakrishnan, 1992). On critical study the species was found to be new and hence described and illustrated.

Leptopus sanjappae Sumathi, Karthigeyan, Jayanthi & Diwakar *sp. nov.* (Fig. 1)

Leptopodi australi similis, stipulis persistentibus, floribus masculis pedicellis brevioribus, 2-4 mm longis, disci glandulis lobatis in parte dimidio superiore, floribus femineis sepalis late ellipticis, petalis absentibus differt.

Much branched, monoecious undershrub up to 30 cm high; branches weak, brittle, spreading on ground procumbent, appressed hairy in tender parts, glabrous with age. Leaves simple, chartaceous, elliptic-lanceolate to ovate, 1-4.5 × 0.4-1.7 cm, acuminate to mucronate at apex, ciliate along margin, hairy on midrib and lateral nerves beneath, cuneate to obtuse or rounded at base; lateral nerves 6-8 pairs, anastomosing along margin; petioles 0.4-1.7 cm long, hairy; stipules lanceolate, *ca* 1.5 × 1 mm, glabrous within, hairy without, ciliate along margin, persistent. Flowers axillary; males in clusters, females solitary or in pairs; bracts minute, congested, *ca* 0.25 mm long, hairy. Male flowers cream coloured, 3-4 mm across, 5-merous; pedicels 2-4 mm long, hairy; sepals membranous, hairy without, glabrous within, narrowly obovate, 1.5-2 × 1-1.2 mm, rounded or acute at apex; petals narrowly obovate, 0.8-1 × 0.4-0.5 mm, acute at apex, glabrous; disc glands 5, antepetalous, fleshy, *ca* 1 mm long, lobed at upper half, lobules oblong, divaricate and U shaped; stamens 5, alternate with petals, filament *ca* 1 mm long, anthers 4-locular, *ca* 0.25 × 0.25 mm, pistillode minute. Female flowers green, *ca* 5 mm across, apetalous; sepals broadly elliptic, 2-2.5 × 1.7-2 mm, acute to acuminate at apex, densely hairy without, sparsely hairy within, becoming *ca* 5 × 5 mm in fruit; disc glands much flattened and broad, *ca* 1 mm long; ovary *ca* 1 mm long, densely hirsute; style bipartite, *ca* 1 mm long, stylar arms circinate. Capsule *ca* 6 × 6 mm; seeds 6, segmentiform with sharp angles, *ca* 2 × 2 mm, obscurely reticulate, dull brown.

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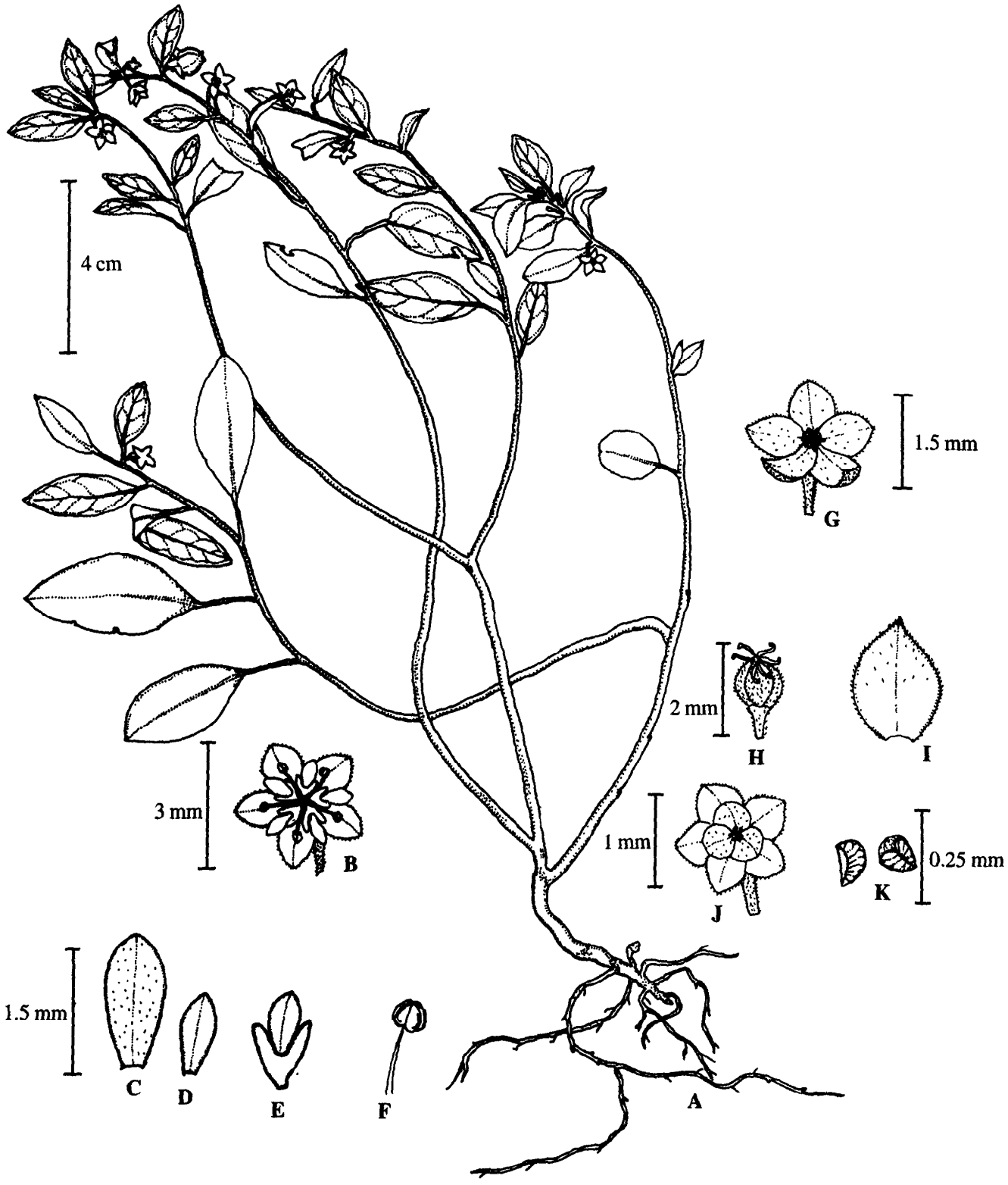


Fig. 1. : *Leptopus sanjappae* Sumathi, Karthigeyan, Jayanthi *et* Diwakar *sp. nov.* A. Habit; B. Male flower; C. Sepal; D. Petal; E. Disc gland with petal; F. Stamen; G. Female flower; H. Ovary; I. Sepal; J. Fruit; K. Seeds.

Type : India, Andaman & Nicobar Islands: North Andamans, Saddle Peak National Park, Stunted evergreen forest ± 600m, 18th September 2001, Sumathi, Karthigeyan & Jayanthi, 17362 (Holo: CAL, Iso: PBL, MCCH).

Flowering & Fruiting : September March.

Distribution : India : Andaman & Nicobar Islands, North Andaman, Saddle peak National Park.

Habitat : Stunted evergreen vegetation near Bamboo brakes at ± 600 m elevation.

The species shows affinities with *L. australis* (Zoll. & Mor.) Pojark, a species distributed in Thailand, Indo China, Malaysia, Indonesia (Java, Tanimbar Isl.) and Philippines but differs from it in having persistent stipules, the male flowers with shorter pedicel and disc glands lobed at upper half with oblong lobules. The female flowers have broadly elliptic sepals and lack petals.

The two species can be distinguished as follows:

L. australis (Zoll. & Mor.) Pojark	*L. sanjappae* sp. nov.
Stipules caducous, triangular.	Stipules persistent, lanceolate.
Male flowers :	Male flowers :
Pedicel 7-9 mm long.	Pedicel 2-4 mm long.
Disc glands bipartite to near base; lobule linear, divaricate.	Disc glands bilobed to about middle; lobule oblong.
Female flowers :	Female flowers :
Sepals ovate and unequal.	Sepals broadly elliptic and equal.
Petal present, ovate.	Petals absent.

Etymology : The species is named in honour of Dr. M. Sanjappa, Director, Botanical Survey of India, for his contribution towards Plant Taxonomy.

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