

Photograph of *Scalesia retroflexa* showing characteristic capitula and leaves. Photo: Paúl Mayorga/Charles Darwin Foundation, 2024.

retroflexa is restricted to the rocky south-east coast of Santa Cruz Island. It was assessed as Vulnerable on the IUCN Red List in 1998, but was categorized as Critically Endangered in Ecuador's Red Book of Endemic Plants in 2011 because of its small population and habitat degradation by invasive goats.

The first collections were in 1868, and there were 20th-century herbarium records, mostly from the south-east coast. After a collection in 1998, no new specimens were collected until 2022. In 1999, 29 individuals were fenced at Punta Núñez, but no collections were made and their status remained unmonitored for over 2 decades. In May 2022, we confirmed this population persists, documenting 23 adults and seedlings. Goat activity was observed in the area, and the original fence had collapsed. In 2023, a fence was installed around an area of 2,500 m². Tetrazolium viability tests showed low germination (6.7% in 2023 and 3.5% in 2024), indicating major restoration challenges as a result of limited seed viability.

In November 2024, we confirmed a second population at El Garrapatero Beach, a site known to have harboured *S. retroflexa* historically, but where no individuals had been recorded for 29 years. We tagged 16 individuals, collected seeds and deposited herbarium specimens at the Charles Darwin Research Station. Goat scat confirmed ongoing threats to this population.

Both sites are characterized by proximity to the shoreline, low elevation and rocky terrain, often in association with species such as *Opuntia echios, Lantana peduncularis, Castela galapageia, Scutia spicata, Croton scouleri, Maytenus orbicularis, Lycium minimum* and *Bursera graveolens*. Historical records describe other populations in locations with similar ecological conditions. The total number of individuals remains unknown, and a broader survey of the south-east coast of Santa Cruz is planned for 2025, to clarify the species' current distribution and status. Conservation efforts include propagation and habitat restoration to support species survival.

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Patricia Jaramillo Díaz[1,2] *(patricia.jaramillo@fcdarwin.org.ec), Anna Calle-Loor*[1,2] *and Christian Sevilla*[3]
[1]*Charles Darwin Research Station, Charles Darwin Foundation, Santa Cruz, Galapagos, Ecuador.* [2]*IUCN Species Survival Commission Galapagos Plant Specialist Group, Santa Cruz, Galapagos, Ecuador.* [3]*Galapagos National Park Directorate, Galapagos, Ecuador*

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New record of *Catasetum arietinum* reveals humid forest refuges in Brazilian semi-arid region

We report the first confirmed records of *Catasetum arietinum* F.E.L. Miranda & K.G. Lacerda in the state of Paraíba, north-east Brazil. According to the *Flora e Funga do Brasil* project, this species, of the Orchidaceae family, is endemic to Brazil, and was previously recorded only in the north-east, in the state of Pernambuco. Despite its restricted geographical distribution, the conservation status of this species has not been assessed. The new records are from the municipality of Lagoa Seca, c. 120 km from the state capital, João Pessoa.

The first record was in June 2015 in a fragment of humid Atlantic Forest on a large private cattle ranch. In the interior of north-east Brazil such forest remnants are known as *Brejos de Altitude*, montane humid forests occurring on plateaus, highlands and escarpments within the semi-arid region. These are fragments of mesophytic and hydrophytic diversity surrounded by a dry vegetation matrix, and are of high conservation value. However, they

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Catasetum arietinum recorded in May 2025 in the state Paraíba, showing (a) habit, (b) inflorescence and (c) details of flowers.

are under intense anthropogenic pressure, particularly from selective logging, agricultural expansion and real estate development. The second record was on a small private rural property c. 1 km from the first, in May 2025. This area is characterized by subsistence agriculture, with small-scale cropping and limited secondary vegetation remaining.

Only a single *C. arietinum* was found in each of the two localities, growing epiphytically in humid, shaded microhabitats. The few individuals found, combined with the lack of formal protection in these areas, raises concerns regarding the species' local conservation status. *Catasetum arietinum* is poorly documented, with few specimens in national herbaria, and its geographical distribution is thus poorly known, which may reflect both actual rarity and a lack of surveys in suitable habitats. Given that the species is associated with humid Atlantic Forest remnants, there is a need to intensify surveys.

This new record of *C. arietinum*, in Paraíba, extends the known distribution of the species and highlights the importance of *Brejos de Altitude* as refuges for moisture-dependent species within the Brazilian semi-arid region. The occurrence of the species in both forest fragments and agricultural areas suggests a certain ecological tolerance, although likely constrained by specific microclimatic conditions. These findings emphasize the urgent need to expand botanical inventories in under-surveyed regions and to strengthen conservation efforts in areas potentially suitable for the species.

Anderson Silva Pinto[1], *Sérgio de Faria Lopes*[1] *and Fernanda Kalina da Silva Monteiro*[2] *(fernanda.silva.bio@gmail.com)*
[1]*Universidade Estadual da Paraíba, Campina Grande, Paraíba, Brazil.* [2]*Instituto Nacional do Semiárido, Campina Grande, Paraíba, Brazil*

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Emerging mauve stinger bloom in the Pagasetic Gulf, central Greece

On 8 May 2025, a significant aggregation of mauve stinger jellyfish *Pelagia noctiluca* was observed in the Pagasetic Gulf, central Greece, near Prasouda Island. This observation raises concerns about a potential new localized bloom of this species, which is known for its irregular but mass appearances throughout the Mediterranean. The bloom occurred only 2 years after the conclusion of the major 2020–2023 jellyfish outbreak that affected most of Greece and extended to other parts of the Mediterranean Sea.

The jellyfish were recorded from a small boat, with video footage showing high densities of medusae in surface waters. Notably, both adult specimens, characterized by their violet pigmentation and stinging capability, and juvenile forms, exhibiting a distinct brownish coloration, were present. Water temperatures in the area were seasonally average (c. 17.7 °C), suggesting that typical spring conditions could be facilitating bloom formation.

Although *P. noctiluca* is a pelagic species with wide-ranging dispersal capabilities, this early-season appearance in a semi-enclosed gulf may suggest either (1) the emergence of a new localized bloom, (2) retention of residual populations from the previous widespread event, or (3) altered oceanographic or trophic conditions favouring population growth. The Pagasetic Gulf's limited water

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