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Dracula immunda (Orchidaceae: Pleurothallidinae), a new species from Panama

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Abstract

A new species of *Dracula* (Orchidaceae: Pleurothallidinae), *D. immunda*, from Panama is described and illustrated. This new species differs from those previously described species in its ovoid epichile that is the same width as the hypochile and is externally muricate and has three closely spaced lamellae that reach the margin.

Key words: Santa Fe de Veraguas, Finca Dracula, *Dracula erythrochaete*

Introduction

Dracula Luer (1978: 190) is a genus of orchids with around 130 species recorded thus far from Mexico southward to Peru. All species occur in cloud forests, generally between 1,500 and 2,500 meters above sea level (Luer 1993). Ten species are known from Central America: *Dracula astuta* (Rchb.f.) Luer (1978: 193), *D. carlueri* Hermans & Cribb (in Hermans 1998: 301), *D. erythrochaete* (Rchb.f.) Luer (1978: 195), *D. immunda*, *D. inexperata* Pupulin (2001: 564), *D. maduroi* Luer (2004: 234), *D. olmosii* Luer & Maduro (1999: 136), *D. pusilla* (Rolfe) Luer (1978: 196), *D. ripleyana* (Luer 1979: 147), *D. vespertilio* (Rchb.f.) Luer (1978: 198). Six species are known from Panama (*Dracula astuta*, *D. erythrochaete*, *D. immunda*, *D. maduroi*, *D. olmosii*, *D. pusilla*). All but *Dracula vespertilio* are endemic to Central America. *Dracula vespertilio* is known from Colombia and Ecuador with two disjunct populations occurring in Costa Rica and Nicaragua (Luer 1993).

Dracula species are characterized by an abbreviated stem that is enveloped by loose, tubular, membranous bracts that become papery with age. The stem bears one leaf that is thinly coriaceous, adaxially sulcate, abaxially carinate, and notched apically with a mucro in the sinus. Inflorescences are borne from low on the stem and may be ascending or descending. The peduncle has tight, tubular, membranous bracts and may be singly or successively flowered. Sepals are fused at their base and often form a cup. Petals are typically reduced, oblong, bivalvate at the apex, and textured between the valves (laminae). The lip is divided into a cleft hypochile with a concave base hinged to the column foot and an epichile that is concave and covered with thin keels (lamellae). Most diagnostic characters are found in floral morphology.

Dracula is most closely related to *Masdevallia* Ruiz & Pavon (1794: 122). The genus was originally recognized as a section of *Masdevallia*, until it was elevated by Luer (1978), and subsequently DNA studies (Pridgeon *et al.* 2001) have supported this relationship. Characters supporting monophyly of *Dracula* relative to *Masdevallia* are bivalvate petals and lip with a concave epichile.

The reproductive biology of *Dracula* species is under investigation and becoming better understood. The flowers are suspected to mimic mushrooms in their scent and structure of their lip (Kaiser 2006), which seems to contribute to the attraction of dipteran pollinators, *Zygotricha* spp. (Endara *et al.* 2010). Scent and lip morphology may prove to be important characters involved in the maintenance of species integrity.

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