



## Rediscovery of Robert Wight's *Tephrosia fusca* (Fabaceae: Papilionoideae) from India

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### Abstract

*Tephrosia fusca* is rediscovered from southern part of Western Ghats, India, after 178 years. The complete description of the species is provided along with illustrations. A lectotype is also designated.

**Key words:** Endemism, Faboideae, India, Southern Western Ghats, Kerala, Revision

### Introduction

The genus *Tephrosia* Persoon (1807: 328) is currently recognized with ca. 350 species mostly inhabiting in the tropical and subtropical regions of the world with highest concentration in Africa (Cowie 2004; Schrire 2005; Mabberley 2008). In South Asia, the genus is represented with 29 species, two subspecies and one variety (Kumar & Sane 2003), of which 27 species and one variety are represented in India (Sanjappa 1992). Recent checklist floras published from Kerala enlisted 13 species of the genus (Sasidharan 2004; Nayar *et al.* 2006). *Tephrosia barberi* J. R. Drummond (1918: 320), *Tephrosia calophylla* Beddome (1868–74: 36), *Tephrosia canarensis* J. R. Drummond (1918: 319), *Tephrosia collina* Sharma (1963: 755), *Tephrosia fusca* Wight & Arnott (1834: 210), *Tephrosia jamnagarensis* Santapau (1958: 133), *Tephrosia roxburgiana* J. R. Drummond (1918: 319), *Tephrosia travancorica* Thothathri & D. N. Das (1991: 57) and *Tephrosia wynaadensis* J. R. Drummond (1918: 311), are strict endemics to India (Sanjappa 1992). *Tephrosia travancorica* Thothathri & D. N. Das and *Tephrosia fusca* Wight & Arnott are represented by type specimen only.

As part of revisionary studies on legumes of Kerala, India, we collected an interesting specimen from Kovilkadavu, near Marayoor and Chinnar, in Idukki district of Kerala. On perusal of relevant materials housed at CAL, CALI, FRC, MH, KFRI, RHK and TBGT, came to know that, there is no recent collection of this taxon exists from India, except a partially identified specimen (upto generic level) at Fischer herbarium (FRC 12652), Coimbatore. Later the digital type depository of Edinburgh herbarium (E) helped to solve taxonomic identity and finally confirmed it as the imperfectly known species *Tephrosia fusca* Wight & Arnott, known by the lone collection of Robert Wight (1834). Hence the present collection forms a rediscovery after 178 years.

Robert Wight (1834: 210) commented: “The whole plant is of a dark or dirty-grey in color”. Baker (1876: 114) included this under doubtful species and commented: “*Tephrosia fusca* Wight & Arnott is a plant gathered by Dr. Wight on the Dindygul hills, of which the flowers are not known. In general habit, leaves, inflorescences, vestiture, and the shape of the calyx and pod, it resembles closely *Mundulea suberosa* Benth (1852: 248) but the leaflets are shorter and more obtuse and the pod dehisces readily like that of a *Tephrosia* and the sutures are not thickened so as to form a prominent border. The calyx is that of section *Brissonia*.” Drummond (1918) commented: “Apparently a shrub and perhaps not indigenous. Though more