

A cryptic new species of *Maxillaria* from Colombia

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Abstract: *Maxillaria betancurii*, a new species from Colombia is described.

Key Words: *Maxillaria betancurii*, , Orchidaceae, , Colombia.

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Widespread species often exhibit a great deal of variation that is difficult to formally define. Some species do appear to be variable over their geographic range while others appear to be complexes of closely related species in need of very detailed study. *Maxillaria* section *Rufescens* (*Mormolyca*, *s.l.*) is an excellent example of the latter, as are those species closely related to *M. lepidota* Lindl. During a recent trip to Bogota, I observed a *Maxillaria* in flower in the greenhouses of Arturo Carrillo. While similar to the widespread *M. meridensis*, it simply was not that species. In addition to differences in morphology, this undescribed species appears to be an obligate epiphyte in contrast to *M. meridensis* which is typically lithophytic or terrestrial. I take this opportunity to formally describe this new species.

Maxillaria betancurii Christenson, *sp. nov.*

TYPE: COLOMBIA. Nariño, Mun. Ricaurte, reserve natural La Planada, below the entrance to Santa Rosa, 1300-1700 m, 77°58'W, 1°14'N, 20 Feb 1993, *J. Betancur, W. J. Kress & J. C. Arias* 3937, COL!

Species haec *Maxillaria meridensis* Lindl. similis sed plantis epiphyticis, foliis brevioribus, petalis trinervatis differt

Caespitose epiphytes, the stems producing superposed chains to 50 cm long with age, initially erect, becoming horizontal to somewhat arching-pendent with age. Pseudobulbs fusiform, completely enclosed by sheathing bracts, 2.5 x 0.4 cm, subtended by 2-4 foliaceous bracts, the blades subsimilar to but shorter than the leaves, graduating in size from the base. Leaves two, linear, acute, keeled below, 17 x 0.8 cm. Inflorescences erect scapes produced one per growth on maturing new growths, the peduncles 2-2.5 cm long, the floral bracts elliptic-lanceolate, acute, subequal to the ovaries, pale green, 1.5 cm long. Flowers strongly cupped, without discernable fragrance, the sepals and petals pale yellow, the lip white at the base, stippled with purple below, the sidelobes dark purple connected by a continuous dark purple band beneath, the midlobe bright yellow. Dorsal sepal lanceolate, acute, 1.6 x 0.7 cm, the lateral sepals oblong-lanceolate, acute, 1.8 x 0.6 cm. Petals lanceolate, acute, 1.3 x 0.4 cm. Lip 3-lobed, 1.1 cm long, the sidelobes transversely elliptic, obtuse-rounded, the midlobe broadly ovate-triangular, the fleshy callus to below the base of the midlobe. Column 0.4 cm long, the foot 0.4 cm long. Pedicel and ovary 1.4 cm long.

Etymology: Named for Julio Betancur B., expert on the Bromeliaceae and Heliconiaceae of Colombia, who collected the type specimen. An outstanding botanist at the Universidad Nacional de Colombia, he is professor to an impressive phalanx of future Colombian botanists.

Maxillaria betancurii appears to fundamentally differ from *M. meridensis* by being epiphytic. This may explain the paucity of botanical collections compared to the more accessible *M. meridensis* which is typically lithophytic or terrestrial and often forms large colonies near roadsides. In addition to its ecology, *M. betancurii* has smaller leaves (to 17 x 0.8 cm) than *M. meridensis* which can typically have leaves to 25 x 1.5 cm. That may not seem a very significant difference but when seen side by side the two species are quite distinct. *Maxillaria betancurii* has 3-nerved petals unlike the 1-nerved petals of *M. meridensis*. Finally there appears to be differences in the calli with *M. betancurii* having a simple callus and *M. meridensis* having a primary callus and a pair of slender ancillary calli, but this feature needs further study.

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Figure: Grower: A. Carrillo; Photographer: J. Betancur

