

Keetia namoyae (Rubiaceae, Vanguerieae), a new species from eastern Democratic Republic of Congo

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Abstract

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A new species of *Rubiaceae* from the Democratic Republic of Congo, *Keetia namoyae* O. Lachenaud & Q. Luke, is described and illustrated. The species resembles *Keetia tenuiflora* (Hiern) Bridson and *Keetia mannii* (Hiern) Bridson, but differs from both in having alternate (not opposite) flowering twigs with stiff appressed hairs, few-flowered inflorescences, a longer corolla tube, and larger fruits. The species is only known from the type locality in Maniema Province, and is assessed to be “Critically Endangered” according to IUCN Red List Categories and Criteria.

Résumé

LACHENAUD, O., Q. LUKE & B. BYTEBIER (2017). *Keetia namoyae* (Rubiaceae, Vanguerieae), une nouvelle espèce de l'Est de la République Démocratique du Congo. *Candollea* 72: 23-26. En anglais, résumés anglais et français. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.15553/c2017v721a2>

Une nouvelle espèce de *Rubiaceae* de la République Démocratique du Congo, *Keetia namoyae* O. Lachenaud & Q. Luke, est décrite et illustrée. Elle ressemble à *Keetia tenuiflora* (Hiern) Bridson et *Keetia mannii* (Hiern) Bridson, mais diffère de ces deux espèces par ses rameaux florifères alternes (et non opposés) à poils raides fortement apprimés, ses inflorescences pauciflores, sa corolle à tube plus long, et ses fruits plus gros. L'espèce est uniquement connue de la localité type dans la province du Maniema. Elle est évaluée comme «En Danger Critique d'Extinction» d'après les Catégories et Critères de la Liste Rouge de l'IUCN.

Keywords

RUBIACEAE – Vanguerieae – *Keetia* – Democratic Republic of Congo – Maniema Province – Taxonomy – New species

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Introduction

The genus *Keetia* E.P. Phillips (Rubiaceae, Vanguerieae) was for a long time included in *Canthium* Lam., before BRIDSON (1986) resurrected it for a group of African species. *Keetia* currently includes 32 species, occurring in most of sub-Saharan Africa, except in arid regions. The East African species have been revised by BRIDSON (1986, 1991) but no recent taxonomic revision exists for West and Central Africa. As a result, the genus is taxonomically poorly known, and the number of species certainly underestimated. *Keetia* has some potential interest as a source of medicinal compounds. Recent studies on *K. leucantha* (K. Krause) Bridson, which is used in traditional medicine in Benin, found significant antiplasmodial, antitrypanosomal and antileishmanial activity of leaf and twig extracts in *in vitro* conditions (BERO et al., 2009, 2011). Most of the other *Keetia* species have not yet been tested pharmacologically, and it would be highly interesting to know if they show similar properties.

In 2008, two of us (BB and QL) collected a Rubiaceae specimen in Maniema Province, Democratic Republic of Congo, which the first author identified as a new species. This collection clearly belongs to the tribe Vanguerieae, due to the inflorescences in paired axillary cymes, exerted anthers, exerted style with a conspicuously hooded stigma, and indehiscent fruits with 1-seeded locules. Within this group, it shows all the characters typical of *Keetia* (BRIDSON 1986): sarmentose habit, stipules interpetiolar and caducous, stigma longer than broad, anthers erect and subsessile in the corolla throat, and 2-locular fruits; only the presence of a lid-like area at the apex of the pyrenes, considered typical of the genus, could not be verified, because the fruits are too few for a dissection to be made.

Despite a thorough search among unidentified specimens of *Keetia* and related genera in BR (where most herbarium collections from D.R. Congo are deposited), BRLU, K, P and WAG, no similar collections were found. It thus appears that the species is very rare, and presumably a local endemic. It is here described as *Keetia namoyae* O. Lachenaud & Q. Luke, and its affinities and conservation status are discussed.

Taxonomy

Keetia namoyae O. Lachenaud & Q. Luke, **spec. nova** (Fig. 1).

Typus : DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO. **Prov. Maniema** : Namoya, Mwendamboko Hill, 4°00'05"S 27°32'94"E, 12.IV.2008, fl. & fr., Bytebier & Luke 2796 (holo-: BR [BR000000524731]!; iso-: EA!).

Foliis glabrescentibus et coriaceis venulis tertiariis inconspicuis K. tenuiflorae (Hiern) Bridson et *K. mannii* (Hiern) Bridson *similis*, sed ab ambabus speciebus conspicue differt ramis floriferis alternis (nec oppositis) cum indumento sparso et valde

appresso, inflorescentiis paucifloris, floribus majoribus corollae tubo c. 4 mm longo (nec c. 2 mm) fructibusque majoribus c. 20 × 20 mm apice paullo emarginatis.

Scandent shrub to 2 m high, with branches alternate and directed backwards, subtended by normal (not modified) leaves. *Twigs* rather sparsely covered with very stiffly appressed hairs, which persist for a long time on the woody, medium brown bark. *Stipules* c. 2 mm long, shortly triangular with apex laterally compressed, with same indumentum as twigs, very soon caducous. *Leaves* with petiole 4-7 mm long, stiffly appressed-pubescent; blade elliptic, acute at base, acuminate at tip, 4-9 × 2.2-4 cm, very coriaceous, glabrous above, sparsely appressed-pubescent on midrib beneath, drying dull brownish-green with underside paler; lateral nerves 4-6, not strongly prominent; tertiary veins invisible or almost so; small tuft-domatia present in axils of lateral nerves along midrib. *Inflorescences* cymose, 10-15-flowered, c. 1.5 cm long including c. 0.5 cm long peduncle, shortly branched, sparsely pubescent. *Bracts* small, c. 1.5 mm, triangular and acute at apex, ciliate. *Flowers* (4-)5-merous; pedicels 2-5 mm, densely appressed-pubescent. *Calyx* split almost to the base into narrowly triangular teeth c. 0.75 mm long, shortly ciliate on the margin. *Corolla* cream; tube cylindrical, 4 × 1.5 mm, glabrous outside, hairy inside with a ring of long (c. 1 mm) abruptly deflexed hairs near the lower 1/4th, and short sparse hairs above reaching just under the throat; lobes 2 mm long, reflexed, glabrous. *Flower buds* cylindrical with a rounded head. *Anthers* almost completely exerted, erect, c. 1 × 0.5 mm. *Disk* shortly pubescent. *Style* glabrous, exceeding throat by 3 mm and ending in a hood-like stigma c. 0.7 mm long. *Fruit* slightly obovate, 20 × 20 mm, rounded at base, very shallowly emarginate at apex, glabrous; pedicel reaching c. 8 mm.

Etymology. – The species is named after its only known locality.

Distribution and ecology. – *Keetia namoyae* is only known from the type locality in Maniema Province, eastern D.R. Congo (Fig. 2). It was found only once in disturbed, open secondary rain forest, at an altitude of 977 m. The following species were recorded in the vicinity: *Adenia tricostata* De Wild., *Aidia micrantha* (K. Schum.) F. White, *Aptandra zenkeri* Engl., *Argomuelleria pierlotiana* J. Léonard, *Boehmeria macrophylla* Hornem., *Celosia globosa* var. *porphyrostachya* C.C.Towns., *Crassocephalum rubens* (Jacq.) S. Moore, *Cyperus distans* L.f., *Dichapetalum* sp., *Dichapetalum parvifolium* Engl., *Dioscorea* sp., *Monanthotaxis* sp., *Justicia tenella* (Nees) T. Anderson, *Lindackeria schweinfurthii* Gilg, *Macaranga* sp. nov. (Bytebier & Luke 2805), *Puelia ciliata* Franch.,



Fig. 1. – *Keetia namoyae* O. Lachenaud & Q. Luke. **A.** Flowering twig; **B.** Fruiting twig; **C.** Node with stipules; **D.** Detail of a domatia; **E.** Flower bud; **F.** Open flower; **G.** Longitudinal section of flower; **H.** fruit. [Bytebier & Luke 2796, BR] [Drawing: Antonio Fernandez]

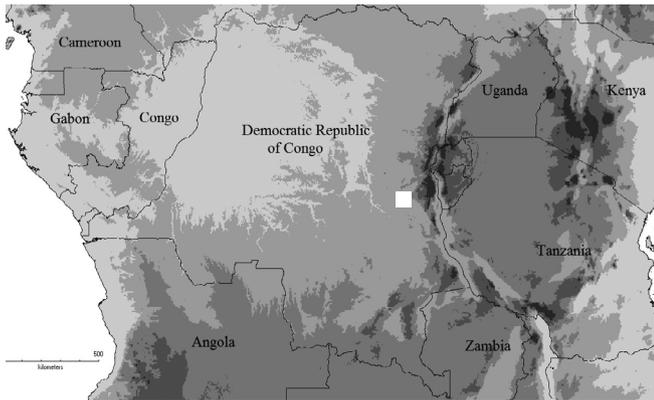


Fig. 2. – Distribution map of *Keetia namoyae* O. Lachenaud & Q. Luke (white square).

Rhabdophyllum welwitschii Tiegh., *Rutidea insculpta* Bridson, *Solanum welwitschii* C.H. Wright, *Spermacoce exilis* (L.O. Williams) W.C. Burger & C.M. Taylor, *Thecacoris lucida* (Pax) Hutch. and *Tricalysia pallens* Hiern.

Conservation status. – This plant is known from a single location sensu IUCN (2012); the extent of occurrence is therefore not calculable, and the area of occupancy is estimated as 4 km². It was collected on a hill that was due to be mined for gold; a decline in the area of occupancy, habitat extent and quality, number of locations and number of individuals is therefore expected. No other individuals are known, although the area has several other hills and is at the edge of extensive primary forest. The species is therefore assessed to be “Critically Endangered” [CR B2ab(ii,iii,iv,v)+D1] of the IUCN (1991).

Notes. – *Keetia namoyae* is a rather distinctive species due to its very large fruits, small coriaceous leaves with inconspicuous tertiary venation, and twigs with sparse and very stiffly appressed hairs. Due to the appressed-pubescent twigs and lack of conspicuous tertiary veins, *K. namoyae* most closely resembles *K. tenuiflora* (Hiern) Bridson and some forms of *K. mannii* (Hiern) Bridson (the latter usually has glabrous twigs, but occasional variants with pubescent twigs occur). However, these two species differ from *K. namoyae* in many characters, including: flowering twigs opposite, with indumentum not so stiffly appressed; flowers more numerous (at least 25 per inflorescence, often more) and distinctly smaller, with corolla tube c. 2 mm long only; fruits smaller, < 12 mm long, frequently 1-seeded, or if 2-seeded then strongly bilobed. *Keetia tenuiflora* further differs from *K. namoyae* in having a pale buff-grey bark.

Although BRIDSON (1991: 921) described the fruits of *K. tenuiflora* as “1.2-1.5 cm long, 2 cm wide”, this appears to be erroneous; the largest fruits we have seen in this species are 12 mm long and 17 mm wide.

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