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***Striga gesnerioides* (Willd.) Vatke: A New Record for the Kalakad –Mundanthurai Tiger Reserve, Tamil Nadu, India**

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Abstract

Striga gesnerioides (Willd.) Vatke, a plant of the Scrophulariaceae that is often reported to be parasitic on the roots of crop plants, has been reported for the first time from the Kalakad Mundanthurai Tiger Reserve forest, Tirunelveli District, Tamil Nadu, India. The specimen was collected from the Kakachi forest range.

Keywords: Kalakad Mundanthurai Tiger Reserve, Scrophulariaceae, *Striga gesnerioides*.

Introduction

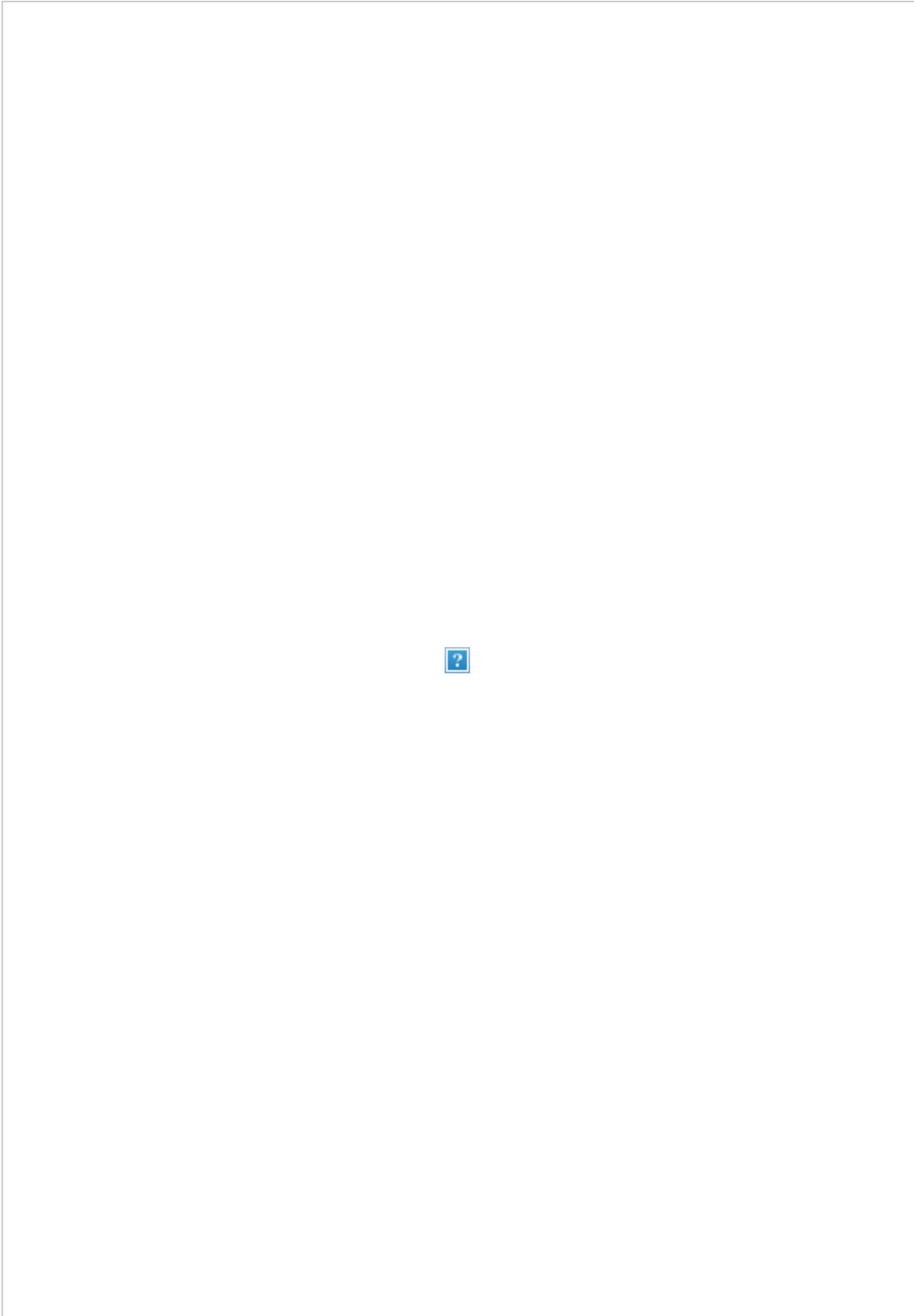
Kalakad Mundanthurai Tiger Reserve (KMTR), once largely a protected forest area, became a Tiger reserve in 1988. This reserve, a global biodiversity hotspot, is a land of ecological and biological diversity. The KMTR (895 Km²; 8°25' to 8°53' N and 77°35' E) is located between Tirunelveli and the Kanyakumari district of Tamil Nadu. On a field trip to the wet forests of Kakachi (8°40' and 77°3' E) in the Kalakad-Mundanthurai Tiger Reserve (Kakachi is located at 1250 m msl), I had the opportunity to collect a very interesting plant. With the help of the literature, it was later identified as *Striga gesnerioides* of the Scrophulariaceae. This plant was previously reported from Ceylon (Dassanayake, 1983), Thar Desert (Bhandari, 1990) and the Palani hills (Mathew, 1998), but not from the above described region. The present report is a new distributional record of the species. The specimen has been deposited in the Animal Health Research Unit, St. Xavier's College (Autonomous), Palayamkottai, Tamil Nadu, India. A detailed description and illustration (Fig.1) are given here to facilitate identification.

Species Description

Striga gesnerioides (Willd.) Vatke, Oesterr. Bot.Z.25:11.1875; Alston in Trimen, Handb. Fl. Ceylon, 6: 216:1931; Abeywick, 1. C. 222; Mathew, Fl. Tamil Nadu Carnatic, 3: 1105, t.78n. 1983; Bhandari, Fl. Ind. Desart.1990 and Mathew, Suppli. III. Fl. Palani Hills, t. 1075-1998.

A parasitic root herb to 16 cm tall with stout, elongated, purple to brownish, leafless stems. Leaves reduced to scales. Leaves scaly, 1 x 0.3 cm. Spikes to 15 cm long, purple. Calyx- tube 3 mm long, 5-ribbed; lobes 5, lanceolate, 1-ribbed, to 5 mm long, sub succulent, hirsute without, and shortly acuminate. Corolla purple, *ca.* 5mm, wide, tube 8mm long, glabrous, lobes 5, obtuse, 5 mm long. Stamens 4; filament pairs 1 and 1.5 mm long, anthers oblong; 0.8mm long. Ovary oblong, 2.5 mm long; style 4.5 mm long; stigma sub capitate. Capsule obovoid, 5 mm long. Seeds elliptic. Fl. & Fr.: March - April.

Specimen examined: India: Tamil Nadu, Kalakad-Mundanthurai Tiger Reserve, 1200m, 16th April 2001 (Voucher No.SXCAH1).



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