Research article

Rhaphiostylis minima Jongkind (Icacinaceae),
a new liana species from Ivory Coast & Liberia

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Abstract. A new species of Rhaphiostylis, R. minima sp. nov. from Liberia and Ivory Coast, is described and illustrated here. It is characterised by its comparatively small size, an ovate to lanceolate leaf blade with long drip tip and a partly glabrous ovary that is in shape in between those of R. elegans Engl. and R. preussii Engl. Rhaphiostylis elegans is lectotypified and illustrated here.

Keywords. Rhaphiostylis, tropical forest, taxonomy, conservation.

Introduction

Rhaphiostylis is an Icacinaceae genus of ca. 10 liana species endemic to tropical Africa (Boutique 1960, Villiers 1973a, 1973b). Only 4 species were known from the Upper Guinean flora subregion (the closed forest from Senegal to Togo) where the new species was discovered, R. beninensis (Hook.f. ex Planch.) Planch. ex Benth., R. cordifolia Hutch. & Dalziel, R. ferruginea Engl. and R. preussii Engl. (Hepper 1958: 638; Hawthorne & Jongkind 2006: 346).

In 2013 a small Rhaphiostylis climber with glabrous leaves and branches was found flowering and fruiting in the evergreen forest in the south-east of Liberia. With the small and slender leaves with a long drip tip it is already at first sight different from R. preussii. Rhaphiostylis preussii is the only other Rhaphiostylis with glabrous leaves often found in the undergrowth in that forest area. Later it became clear that the shape and indumentum of the ovary is also distinct (Fig. 1F). In Rhaphiostylis the leaf shape and the indumentum of the ovary are important characters for identification of the species (Hepper 1958). The new species, R. minima sp. nov., most resembles R. elegans Engl. from Cameroon, being also a smaller liana with more or less similar leaves. The new species differs from R. elegans by its less stretched and more hairy ovary (Fig. 1F, Table 1). Moreover, there exists also a large geographical gap between the two. The here illustrated flower of R. elegans shows the stretched ovary with a long narrow middle part, while the ovaries of the two R. preussii flowers, from Ivory Coast and Gabon, have only a narrow constriction. The ovary of R. minima sp. nov. is in shape and indumentum in between R. elegans and R. preussii. The ovary of the only other Rhaphiostylis species from Upper Guinea with glabrous leaves and branches, R. beninensis, is in shape and size more or less equal to the one of R. preussii but it is glabrous or almost so (Villiers 1973a: 35). The flower of R. preussii, illustrated by Villiers (1973a: 35) after Le Testu 7491 from Gabon, is similar to that of the specimens illustrated here.
The new species is named here *R. minima* sp. nov., it being the smallest species in the genus. All specimens are small climbers only a few meters high, much smaller than all other *Rhaphiostylis* species from Upper Guinea. Except for *R. preussii*, the hairy *R. cordifolia* is the only other *Rhaphiostylis* species found in the same evergreen forests. *Rhaphiostylis beninensis* and *R. ferruginea* are growing in drier forest types like semi-deciduous forest (Hawthorne & Jongkind 2006: 3).

In a table (Table 1) all *Rhaphiostylis* species with glabrous leaves and branches from Upper Guinea and *R. elegans* are compared.

When preparing the Icacinaceae issues of the Floras of Cameroon and Gabon, Villiers could not find type material of *R. elegans* and could not place it (Villiers 1973a: 41). The original description (Engler 1909: 184) was based on fruiting material only and the flowers were never described, this made it difficult to understand the taxon. In 1986 a duplicate of the destroyed holotype was found in the MO herbarium by Al Gentry and Duncan Thomas (noted on the sheet). During the research on the new species it was possible to match this isotype of *R. elegans* in herbaria with other specimens. In this publication an illustration is included from a newly identified flowering specimen (Fig. 1).

In the fresh flowers of *R. preussii* and *R. beninensis* the flat filaments touch each other along the edge and together they close around the ovary from their base to about half their length (Figs 2, 3). It is likely that the stamens of *R. minima* sp. nov. and those of other species in the genus share this character because they also share the special shape of the filaments.

**Materials and Methods**

The new species was studied and collected in 2013 and 2014 by the author in the forest in the southeast of Liberia. The BR, K, P and WAG herbaria were searched for additional specimens of the new species and *R. elegans*. The herbarium, where the specimens are located, is indicated by the international code (herbarium acronym) registered in Index Herbariorum (Thiers continuously updated). Preliminary assessments of the IUCN Red List categories of threat were performed using the IUCN criteria and the Royal Botanic Gardens Kew website [http://geocat.kew.org](http://geocat.kew.org).

**Results**

**Order “unplaced”** (Kårehed 2001)

**Family Icacinaceae Miers**

**Genus Rhaphiostylis Planch. ex Benth.**

**Key to the species in Upper Guinea (forest area west of Nigeria)**

1. Leaves and twigs of plant almost glabrous ..........................................................................................2
   – Leaves and twigs of plant densely appressed or erect hairy, at least on the young parts ..............4

2. Ovary for most of its surface, and the fruit around the base of the style, hairy .........................3
   – Ovary glabrous or with a small patch of hairs on top, fruit glabrous ........................................
     ..................................................................................................................................................*R. beninensis* (Hook.f. ex Planch.) Planch. ex Benth.

3. Constricted middle of the ovary glabrous. All leaves with drip tip 1.5–3 cm long. Slender liana up to
   4 m high .................................................................*R. minima* sp. nov.
   – Constricted middle of the ovary hairy. Drip tip on leaves, if present, shorter. Usually a larger
     liana .................................................................................................................................*R. preussii* Engl.
4. Leafbase rounded to cordate. Flower pedicel up to 3 mm long. In evergreen forest ..............................................

- Leafbase cuneate or obtuse. Flower pedicel 6 to 9 mm long. Mainly in semideciduous forest

\textit{Rhaphiostylis minima} Jongkind sp. nov.

\texttt{urn:lsid:ipni.org:names:77150009-1}

\texttt{Table 1, Figs 1D–G, 2}

**Diagnosis**

Slender woody liana up to 4 m high, resembling \textit{R. elegans} Engl. from Cameroon in leafshape. Differing from \textit{R. elegans} in the first place by its shorter and more hairy ovary, 2.5–3 mm \textit{versus} 3.5–4 mm.

**Type**

IVORY COAST. \textit{ca}. 140 km N of Tabou, crossing Hana River, on the way to Taï, fl., 10 Oct. 1963, \textit{W. de Wilde 1061} (holo-: WAG; iso-: BR, K n.v.)

**Description**

Slender woody liana going up to 3–4 m high. Leaves alternate, glabrous; slender petiole 2–3 mm long; blade ovate to lanceolate, 5–10 cm long and 1.5–3.5 cm wide, papery, midrib impressed above, 3 or 4 pairs of main laterals of which the first are often long and ascending, margin entire, base rounded, apex long acuminate, up to 3 cm long with a spatulate tip. Inflorescences fasciculate, supra-axillary with 1–3 flowers. Flowers bisexual; pedicel 2–4 mm long; calyx 5 lobed, lobes about 1 mm long, puberulous; petals 5, \textit{ca}. 5 mm long, valvate, free, glabrous. Stamens 5, glabrous; filaments subulate, gradually narrowing to filiform above, about 4 mm long, alternipetalous; anthers \textit{ca}. 1 mm long. Ovary 2.5–3 mm high, hairy on the lower \(\frac{1}{2}\) and at the top, almost glabrous on the narrow part in between; style 3.5–4 mm long, excentric but erect. Fruit 2-lobed, flattened through the longitudinal axis, fleshy with thin exocarp, smooth and glabrous, but conspicuously hairy on and around the base of the persistent style; endocarp woody, reticulate, about 1.5 cm wide and 1 cm high.

**Distribution and habitat**

South-east Liberia and south-west Ivory Coast below 250 m altitude. In the shade of evergreen forest with a rainfall of more than 2200 mm a year and a weak dry season.

**Additional material examined**


**Conservation status**

The “Extent of Occurrence” (EOO) is 6,056 km\(^2\) and the “Area of Occupancy” (AOO) is 32 km\(^2\), the EOO counts as “Vulnerable” and the EOO counts as “Endangered”. The AOO is based on a cell width of 2 km. None of the 9 specimens was collected in a protected area, but it is very likely that the species occurs in Sapo National Park in Liberia, as this protected area is completely included in the species EOO. The plant and its flowers are not conspicuous, so it is probably more common than what the few collections suggest. However, looking at all the economical development planned and in progress in this
Table 1. Main differences between *Rhaphiostylis beninensis*, *R. elegans*, *R. minima* sp. nov. and *R. preussii*.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th><em>R. beninensis</em></th>
<th><em>R. elegans</em></th>
<th><em>R. minima</em> sp. nov.</th>
<th><em>R. preussii</em></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Length when fertile</td>
<td>&gt; 15 m</td>
<td>5–10 m</td>
<td>3–4 m</td>
<td>&gt; 10 m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leaf apex</td>
<td>short acuminate</td>
<td>long driptip 1.5–3 cm</td>
<td>long driptip 1.5–3 cm</td>
<td>acuminate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ovary shape</td>
<td>1.5–2 mm high, short constriction between lower part and top</td>
<td>3.5–4 mm high, with long constricted part</td>
<td>2.5–3 mm high, shape in between <em>R. preussii</em> and <em>R. elegans</em></td>
<td>1.7–2.5 mm high, short constriction between lower part and top</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ovary indumentum</td>
<td>glabrous or only hairy on top</td>
<td>only lower ca. ½ hairy</td>
<td>hairy on the lower half and at the top, almost glabrous on the narrow part in between</td>
<td>completely hairy or only glabrous around the base</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fig. 2. *Rhaphiostylis preussii* Engl. showing flowers with the flattened filaments closing around the ovary while the petals are bending down. Photograph by Ehoarn Bidault (Missouri Botanical Garden) from Bidault 786 (MO) from Gabon.
part of Liberia, and while it is not sure that the species grows in a protected area, “Vulnerable” should be the correct status for the moment (B1 & B2 ab(iii), IUCN 2015).

**Remarks**

All specimens cited under the new species were collected after the publication of the Icacinaceae in the *Flora of West Tropical Africa* (Hepper 1958).

The leaves of seedlings of *Rhaphiostylis beninensis* and *R. preussii* may resemble those of mature *R. minima* sp. nov.

*Rhaphiostylis elegans* Engl.

(Fig. 1A–C)


**Additional material examined**

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Fig. 4. Distribution map of Rhaphiosylis minima sp. nov.


Remarks
Specimens of Rhaphiostylis elegans key out as R. preussii with the Flore du Gabon (Villiers 1973a) and Flore du Cameroun (Villiers 1973b). According to notes in the WAG herbarium there should be a duplicate specimen of the type in Kew but I could not find it.

Acknowledgements
I am grateful to Hans de Vries for preparing the drawing, and I also want to thank Ehoarn Bidault and Bart Wursten for the use of their photographs.

References


Manuscript received: 10 February 2015
Manuscript accepted: 14 July 2015
Published on: 22 September 2015
Topic editor: Thomas Janssen
Desk editor: Natacha Beau

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