

Newsletter of the ARSV



Another new species from China

Rhododendron longipedicellatum Lei Cai, Jens Neilsen, Zhi-Ling Dao, Yong-Peng Ma

A new *Vireya* from subsection *Pseudovireya* has been described from Malipo County, Southeast Yunnan, China. It is a shrub to 2.5 m tall with whorled leaves with usually deep red petioles and pure yellow unblotched flowers to 2 cm long. The flowers are in multi-flowered umbels a feature known from only 4 of the other 10 species in this subsection (*R. rushforthii* from northern Vietnam and Yunnan, *R. kawakamii* from Taiwan, *R. datiangdingense* from Guangdong, China, and *R. trancongii* from Vietnam). It is most similar to *R. rushforthii* (see table for differences).

So far it is only known from three populations at the type locality on limestone at 1180 – 1250 m asl in southeastern Yunnan in forest of oaks (*Cyclobalanops glaucoides*) and pistachios (*Pistacia weinmannifolia*) with orchids, hemlocks (*Tsuga* spp.) and yews (*Taxus* spp.). The total population is estimated at 510 plants but it could be distributed wider in Yunnan and, like *R. rushforthii* in northern Vietnam.

Lei Cai, Jens Neilsen, Zhi-Ling Dao, Yong-Peng Ma 2016. *Rhododendron longipedicellatum* (Ericaceae), a new species from Southeastern Yunnan, China. *Phytotaxa* 282 (4): 296–300. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.11646/phytotaxa.282.4.7>.

The picture reproduced here is from the original paper.

Feature	<i>R. longipedicellatum</i>	<i>R. rushforthii</i>
Leaves	Whorled	scattered
Leaf shape	obovate to oblong-obovate	elliptical
Leaf apex	rounded, emarginate	broadly acute, not emarginate
Pedice	3-4.2 cm	1-2.2 cm
Calyx lobes	0.8-2.0 mm long, ovate or triangular	3–4 mm long, triangular
Stamens	1-1.8 cm long	0.8-0.9 cm long



Rhododendron in focus: *R. campylogynum*

Subsection Campylogynum

There is only one species in this Subsection and the many variations formerly regarded as species are given group status. The flower colour can vary from cream, pink, red, to deep purple. We have lost a number of this species in the N.R.G. but still have six plants, mostly in the main rockery. Fortunately, it seems to strike easily from cuttings and eight cuttings I took last November are doing well. This is an excellent species for the rockery, and our plant flowers prolifically in late November, on a compact mound only around 25 cm. high. (see photo).

The flowers of this plant (Myrtilloides Group) are quite small, around one cm. long and bright pink. Peter Cox, in "The Smaller Rhododendrons", says it does not like a hot position or dry soil, which probably accounts for our previous losses. This species has a wide distribution in the wild from Arunachal Pradesh (NE India), Tibet, Upper Burma, and Yunnan, growing in rocks, cliffs, and open hillsides, at 2400 to 5000 metres.

Alan Keper.



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Report on the Australian Rhododendron Society Expedition to North Queensland by Andrew Rouse

In August 2016, nine members of the Australian Rhododendron Society spent an enjoyable (and wet!) week in North Queensland, to assist the Australian Tropical Herbarium (ATH) with collecting specimens of *R. lochia* and *R. viriosum* for re-establishment in cultivation. The trip provided the Society members with the opportunity of seeing our native Rhododendron in the wild across a number of different sites.

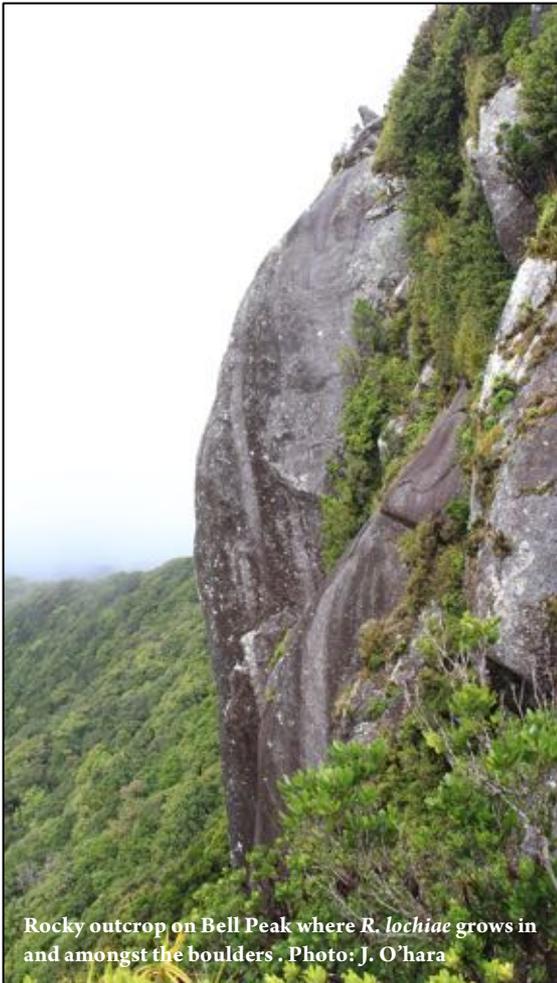
The project, funded by the Ian Potter Foundation and led by Professor Darren Crayn, Australian Tropical Herbarium, has three objectives: to collect herbarium specimens of *R. lochia* and *R. viriosum* from a range of different locales; to establish (or re-establish) in cultivation *R. lochia* and *R. viriosum* from each locale including a number of specimens from each population; and to undertake DNA analysis to compare the genetic variation within and between populations of *R. lochia* and *R. viriosum*.

Earlier in the year Professor Crayn and his team had visited and collected specimens of *R. viriosum* from Thornton Peak and from a hitherto unknown locale on the Mt Lewis Tableland, and *R. lochia* from Bellenden Ker and Bell Peak. The Society expedition set the ambitious goal of collecting from the following sites over the week: Bell Peak (*R. lochia*), Mt Lewis Tableland (*R. viriosum*), Mt Spurgeon (*R. viriosum*), and Mt Windsor Tableland (*R. viriosum*)

The cuttings collected are being held at the National Rhododendron Gardens Olinda and in my glasshouse. In Autumn this year, back up cuttings will be taken. This collection will be valuable in identifying the morphological variation within and between populations of *R. lochia* and *R. viriosum*. In time, we hope to establish a bed at NRG Olinda to display the plants.



ARS participants: Neil Puddey, Rob Hatcher, Simon Begg, Marcia Begg, Prue Crome, Dale Schubert, Glenn Maskell and John O'Hara

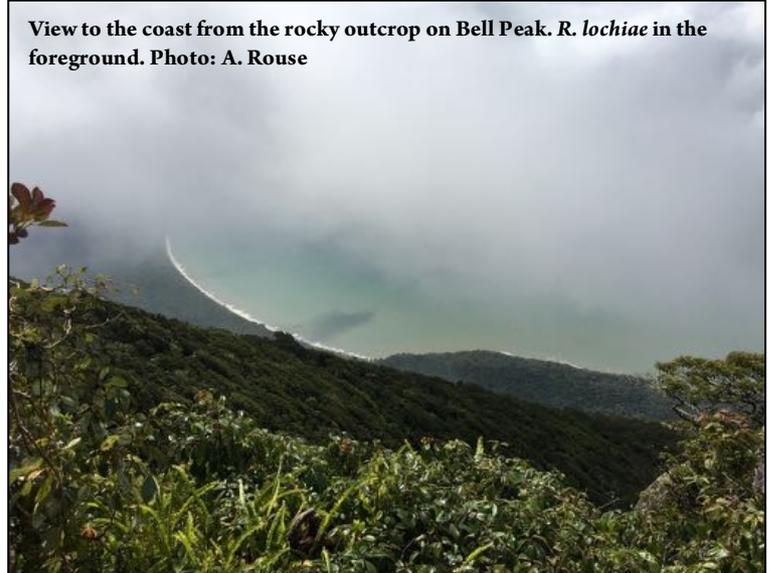


Rocky outcrop on Bell Peak where *R. lochiaie* grows in and amongst the boulders . Photo: J. O'hara

Bell Peak

Bell Peak is the highest mountain in the Malbon Thompson Range that runs parallel to the coast south of Cairns. The walk to the summit is steep and through leech infested forest – thorough application of ‘tropical strength’ repellent did little to keep the leeches at bay! The population of *R. lochiaie* is confined to a rocky outcrop, a precipitous 200 m walk below the summit on the east, or ocean side of the mountain. In a small area – less than a hectare - *R. lochiaie* grows in profusion, in a microclimate where there is full sun with moisture laden clouds regularly covering the peak.

Unfortunately we did not see any plants in flower, a recurring theme for the trip. However there were many fine specimens, and cuttings were collected from five plants.



View to the coast from the rocky outcrop on Bell Peak. *R. lochiaie* in the foreground. Photo: A. Rouse

Mount Lewis Tableland

We next visited a population of *R. viriosum* on Mt Lewis Tableland about 70 km north of Cairns. This population is easily accessible, a short walk from the end of the Mt Lewis Road. The Rhododendron are growing on or amongst mossy rocks, underneath a canopy of *Leptospermum* trees. Where plants are growing from low down on the rock, they can form long ‘whippy’ plants up to 3 metres long as they reach for the light. As with Bell Peak, no flowering observed! We made an unsuccessful trip to the population recently discovered by ATH botanists, about 3-4 km north of the end of the Mt Lewis road, however were frustrated by inaccurate GPS readings that prevented us from pin-pointing the population.



Professor Crayn and ARS Volunteers, amongst plants of *R. viriosum* on Mt. Lewis. Photo: A. Rouse



R. viriosum growing on and amongst rocks on Mt. Lewis. Photo: A. Rouse

Mount Spurgeon

Mt Spurgeon is rarely visited and as far as we could determine, the population of *R. viriosum* on the mountain had not been visited since the 1970s. Mt Spurgeon can only be accessed via a very long and rough 4WD track from Mt Carbine. On the western slopes of Mt Spurgeon are two small enclaves of leasehold land, and Peter Cooper, who lives on one of these, kindly offered to accommodate and guide us.

The group climbed to the summit through stunning, untouched rainforest, and fanned out to search for Rhododendron which were found on the eastern flank of the summit. Here, growing on rocks and fallen logs was a large population of *R. viriosum* covering an area of 2-3 ha and many thousands of plants. The plants were growing under a stunted canopy of trees rather than in full sunlight. Some of the specimens were large, 2-3 m in width and 1.5 m high. The best specimens were often on top of large boulders, with large, cable like roots reaching down to the ground.

A trip highlight was visiting a grove of Black Kauri (*Agathis atropurpurea*). The location of this grove is a tightly kept secret so we felt particularly privileged that Peter Cooper took us to visit it; the largest specimen towers over the surrounding forest and required 7 people with arms extended to encircle it.



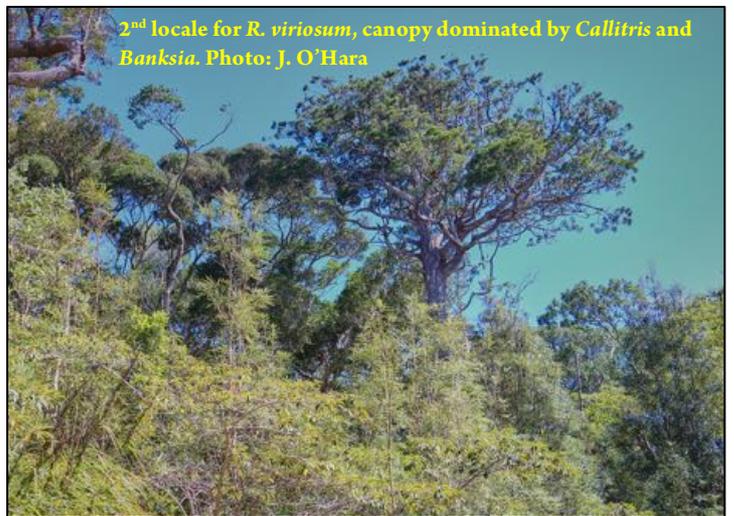
A large specimen of *R. viriosum*, Mt Spurgeon. Growing on low rocks was typical for this population (Photo: Prue Crome)

Mount Windsor Tableland

We were particularly keen to visit Mt Windsor Tableland. *R. viriosum* had previously been collected here however are no longer held in cultivation. *R. viriosum* has also been found growing as an epiphyte on Mt Windsor Tableland. On the first day we visited a number of rocky outcrops previously identified using Google Maps as prospective Rhododendron habitat. Whilst most interesting, these proved 'dry holes' and no rhodos were found. We returned to camp exhausted and somewhat dispirited. The following day, we called Garry Sankowsky, who with his wife Nada are volunteer collectors of herbarium specimens. Garry provided directions to two populations of *R. viriosum*. The first was growing along a creek on the western edge of the Tablelands, with plants confined to 3-4 m of the creek, growing amongst low rocks or boulders. The second population was very different, growing close to one of the highest points on the Tableland, on low rocks under a canopy of *Callitris macleayana* and *Banksia aquilonia*. Both populations were growing in low light conditions.



R. viriosum growing along a creek, Mt Windsor Tableland. Photo: A. Rouse



2nd locale for *R. viriosum*, canopy dominated by *Callitris* and *Banksia*. Photo: J. O'Hara

The Plant Hunters - next newsletter

Our member John Godfrey has written an essay on the plant hunters and we will be serialising it from the next newsletter onwards.

HELP - Rhododendron cochlearifolium?

A new species, *Rhododendron cochlearifolium*, was described in 2012 by Xiang Chen et al. in *Annales Botanici Fennici*. I can find no useful references to it on the web and it is not in "The Plant List". Anybody know of this one?