

Lepanthes aeora Luer & Hirtz, sp. nov.

Planta parvula caespitosa, inflorescentia racemosa pauciflora grandiflora folio elliptico paulo longiore, sepalis ovatis glabris caudatis, petalis transverse bilobis, lobo superiore oblongo obtuso, lobo inferiore anguste triangulari, labello bilaminato, lamina ovatis convexis microscopicamente pubescentibus, corpore supra medium columnae connato, appendice intricatissima suspensa ciliolata.

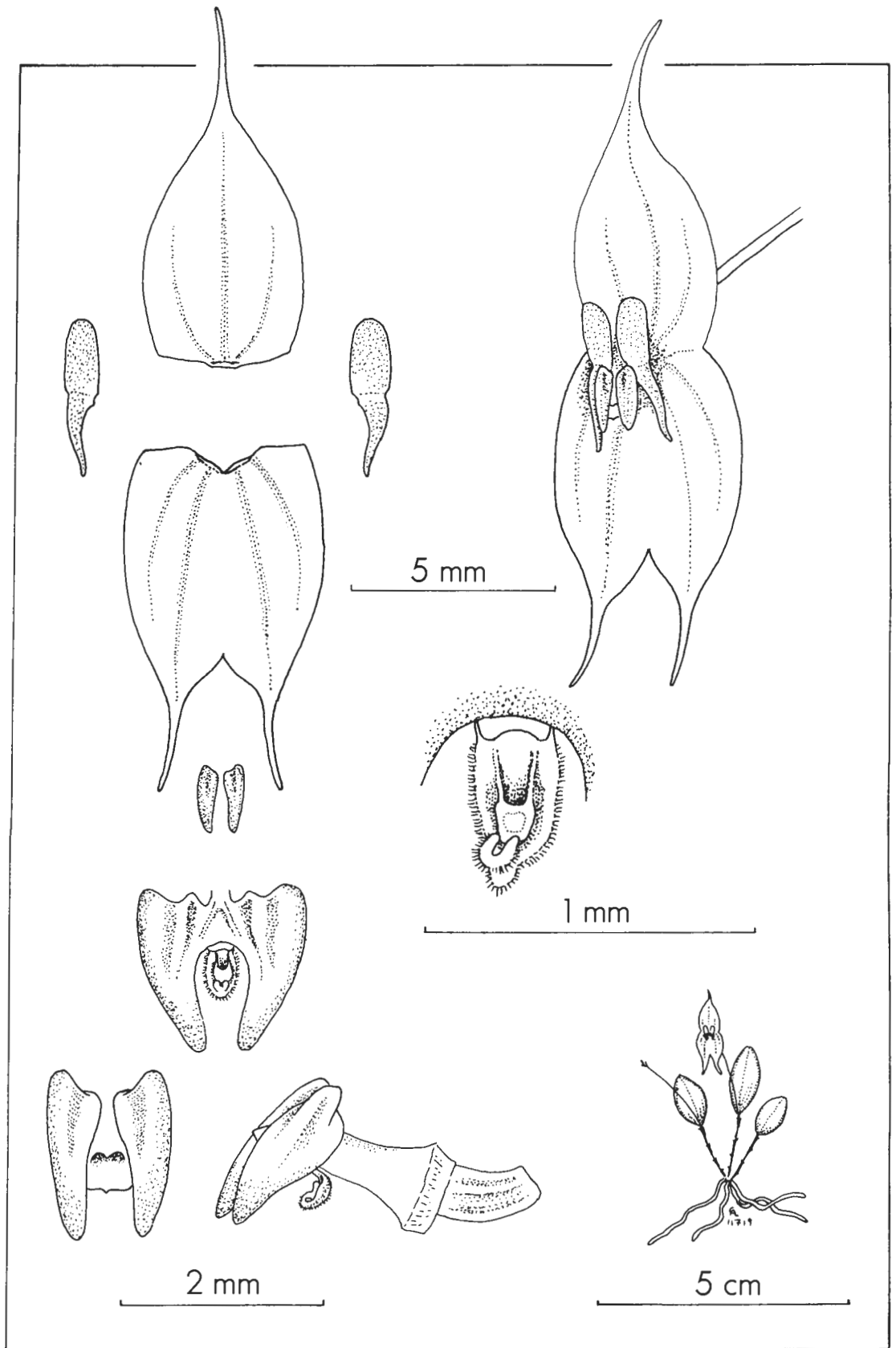
Plant very small, epiphytic, caespitose; roots slender. Ramicauls slender, erect, 4-10 mm long, enclosed by 3-4 lepanthiform sheaths with minutely scabrous ostia. Leaf erect, coriaceous, elliptical, subacute, 8-12 mm long, 5-6.5 mm wide, the base cuneate into a 1 mm long petiole. Inflorescence a proportionately large flower produced in a congested, successively few-flowered raceme 1-2 mm long, borne by a filiform peduncle up to 16 mm long; floral bract 1.25 mm long; pedicel 1.5 mm long; ovary costate, 1 mm long; sepals yellow, suffused with red along the veins, glabrous, carinate externally, the dorsal sepal ovate, the subacute apex contracted into a slender tail 2 mm long, 8.5 mm long including the tail, 4 mm wide, connate to the lateral sepals for 1 mm, the lateral sepals ovate, oblique, subacute, connate 4.5 mm, the subacute apices contracted into slender tails 2 mm long, 8.5 mm long including the tails, 5 mm wide together; petals red, microscopically pubescent, transversely bilobed, 1 mm long, 4 mm wide, the upper lobe oblong, rounded at the end, the lower lobe equally long, narrowly triangular, acute; lip red, bilaminated, the laminae microscopically pubescent, ovate, convex, 1.75 mm long, obtuse, with deflexed sides, the connectives from the bases of the laminae, the body connate to the column above the middle below the stigma, the sinus rounded, with an ovoid, concave, membranous appendix suspended by a pair of microscopic threads, the apex of the appendix with a bifid callus reflexed onto a minute callus within the concavity; column slender, 1.75 mm long, the anther dorsal, the stigma ventral.

ETYMOLOGY: From the Greek *aiora*, "a hammock, a swing," referring to the appearance of the appendix.

TYPE: ECUADOR: Prov. of Napo: epiphytic in cloud forest on the east slopes of Volcán Reventador, alt. 1850 m, 8 Feb. 1986, C. Luer, J. Luer, A. Embree, A. Hirtz & W. Flores 11719 (Holotype: MO).

This tiny plant with the oversized flower is similar to that to *L. caudata* Luer & Escobar as well as other very small species with large flowers. The sepals, however, are smooth instead of denticulate. Otherwise, the flower does not seem particularly

distinctive unless the minute appendix is examined with a binocular microscope. The appendix is developed into a peculiar ovoid structure about 0.5 mm long suspended by a pair of the finest spider web-like threads from the rounded sinus. It swings loosely immediately beneath the stigma because the lip is connate to the shaft of the column above the middle just below the ventral stigma. The body of the appendix is membranous, minutely ciliate and concave with a solid, more or less ovoid callus with a pair of microscopic processes toward the base. At the apex of the appendix a solid, horseshoe-shaped structure points upward or inward to the central callus. The reasons for the adaptation of such an intricate design are far beyond our present comprehension.



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