

***Pleurothallis nivalis* C. A. Luer, sp. nov.**

Planta grandis caespitosa, caulibus secundariis crassis teretibus vaginis laxe amplexicaulibus, foliis coriaceis ellipticus subacutis basi cuneatis breviter petiolatis, pauciracemis longissimis multifloris, spathe foliacea, floribus niveis purpureo-punctulatis, sepalis libris ovatis subacutis pilosis interius, petalis obovatis obtusis trinervis, labello trilobata, lobo antico rhomboideo subacuto, lobis lateralibus rotundatis erectis inter eos concavis, pede columnae bulboso.

Plant large, terrestrial, caespitose; roots slender, flexuous. Secondary stems stout, terete, 15-30 cm long, unifoliate, fasciculate, largely concealed by 3-4 loose, tubular sheaths. Leaf coriaceous, elliptical, subacute, tridentate, base cuneate, shortly petiolate, 10-15 × 3.5-6 cm. Inflorescence racemose (1-4), densely many-flowered, to 35 cm long; peduncle from a spathe, 2.5-3.5 cm long, from the apex of the stem; floral bract infundibular, 4 mm long; pedicel 2 mm long; ovary green, flecked with purple, 2.5-3 mm long; sepals white with a few minute purple spots, ovate, subacute, 8 × 3.5-4.5 mm, 3-veined, the veins prominent externally, glabrous externally, pilose above the middle internally, lateral sepals united only at the base; petals white with purple spots, obovate, obtuse, 5 × 3 mm, 3-veined, the veins prominent externally; lip white, marked with purple, yellow centrally, ovate, 3-lobed, 4 × 3 mm, apical lobe rhomboid, subacute, lateral lobes below the middle, broad, rounded, erect, the base concave to accommodate the column-foot, the concavity extending to between the lateral lobes which continue into thickened calli on the disc of the apical lobe; column white, terete, 3 mm long, with a bulbous foot 2 mm long.

ETYMOLOGY: From the Latin *nivalis*, "snowy, or frosty," in allusion to the snow-white flowers and the frigid, mountainous habitat.

TYPE: ECUADOR: COTOPAXI: terrestrial near the paramo between Pilalo and Lactacunga, alt. 3500 m, 5 March 1975, C. A. Luer & R. Kent 290 (HOLOTYPE: SEL); same area, 14 Feb. 1963, C. H. Dodson & L. B. Thien 2259 (SEL).

DISTRIBUTION: Ecuador.

The fascicled secondary stems of *Pleurothallis nivalis* often mass into huge clumps among the alpine grasses. When they are topped by the numerous long racemes of snow-white flowers, they are beautiful to behold in the misty, bone-chilling cold of the high mountain pass. They might remind one of tiny flurries of snow. At this altitude there exist only a few scrubby trees which might harbor this species epiphytically.

The secondary stems are closely spaced, often sheathed together. The erect leaf is short-petiolate, and at the base a large spathe surrounds the origin of the few long racemes. The white flowers are pubescent within, and a few flecks of purple are present, mostly on the obovate petals and lip. The lateral lobes of the three-lobed lip are rounded and erect, and separated by a concavity extending from the base. The lateral lobes are continuous with thickenings on the apical lobe.

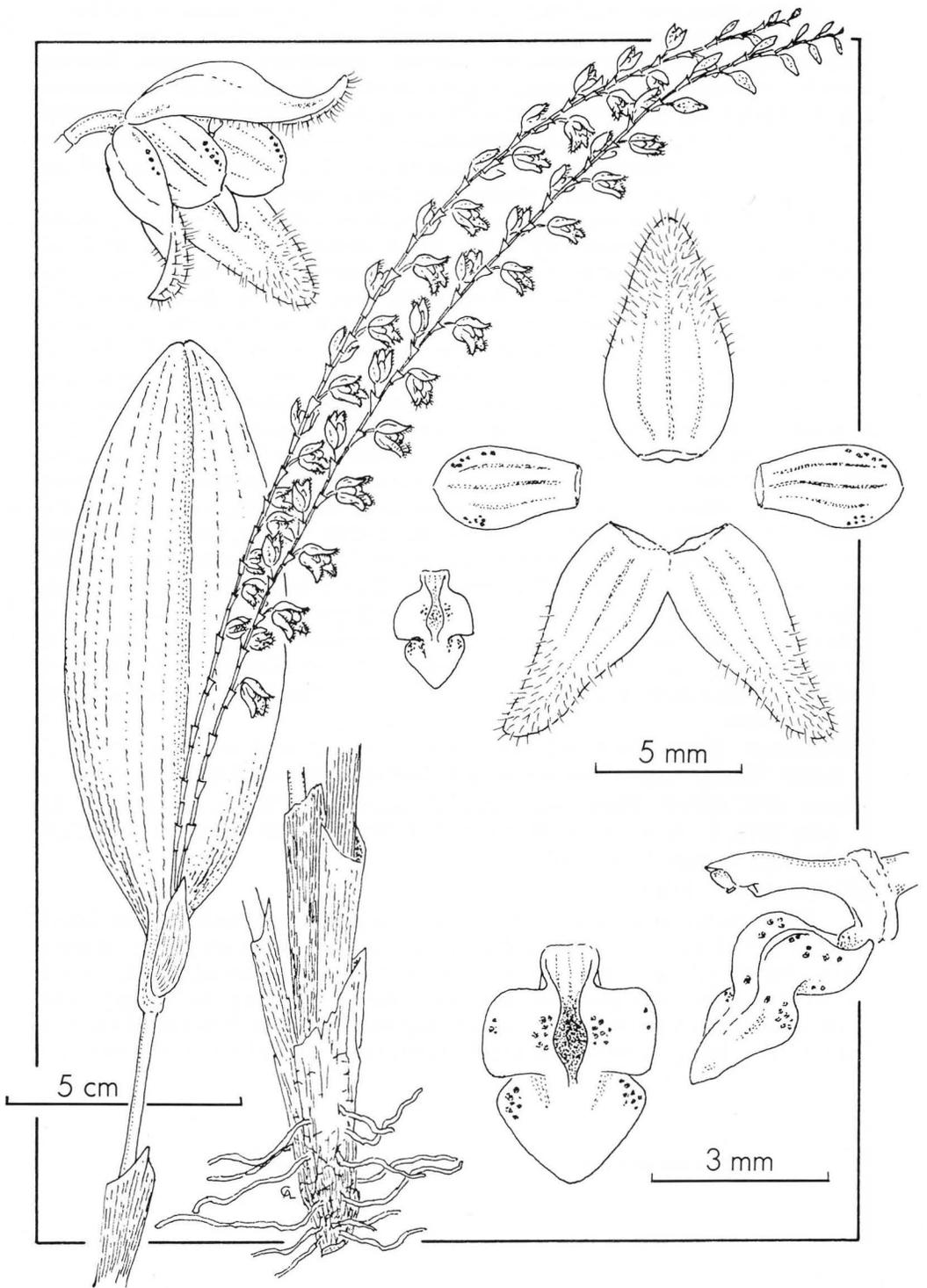


Figure 101. *PLEUROTHALLIS NIVALIS* C. A. Luer