**Liparis tortilis** (Orchidaceae), a new species from south Western Ghats, India

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ABSTRACT
A distinct new species of *Liparis, L. tortilis* (Orchidaceae) is described based on samples collected in the Wayanad Forests of southern Western Ghats, India. A botanical description, photographs of the new taxon, information about the habitat and its conservation status are also provided.

Keywords: *Liparis tortilis*, Orchidaceae, new distribution, India, taxonomy
1. INTRODUCTION

*Liparis* Richard is a large cosmopolitan genus of about 480 species, reported in tropical Asia, Malesia, eastern Australia, the Pacific Islands (including Hawaii and Tahiti), Madagascar, Africa, subtropical and tropical Americas, temperate Europe, Asia and North America (Damian & Ormerod 2016). *Liparis* plants are characterized by terrestrial, lithophytic, or epiphytic; rhizomatous; and, rarely, mycotrophic, and their leaves are reduced to scales, flowers usually have narrow linear petals; a larger and unlobed lip that is incurved and divided to the hypochile and the epichile; an incurved-arcuate, winged column; and four pollinia in two pairs, with each pair having a small viscidium (Chen et al. 2009; Su et al. 2014). This genus contains 51 species in India, of which 11 species in Kerala (Misra 2007; Sasidharan 2013). Besides that, Salim (2015) recently added *Liparis sanamalabarica* P.M.Salim, as new from the Kerala part of southern Western Ghats.

Botanical explorations in the forests of Wayanad District in Kerala, part of south Western Ghats, during 2016–2018, yielded some interesting specimens of the genus *Liparis*. Critical analysis of the literature as well as of herbarium specimens revealed that some of the collected specimens do not match any of the described species. These specimens are considered to be sufficiently distinct to warrant taxonomic recognition as a new species and are here described and illustrated as *Liparis tortilis*.

2. *Liparis tortilis* P.M. Salim & J.Mathew, sp. nov. (Fig. 1: A – H)


**Etymology**

The specific epithet ‘*tortilis*’ refers to the spirally twisted inflorescence of the new species.

**Distribution and Habitat**

*Liparis tortilis* found in the montane grassland forest ca. 895 m of the Aranamala Hills of Wayanad District in Kerala part of Western Ghats, India. Grows in association with *Dienia ophrydis* (Koenig) Ormerod, *Arundinella ciliata* (Roxb.) Nees ex Miq., *Chrysopogon hackelli* (Hook.f.) C.E.C. Fisch., *Desmodium repandum* (Vahl) DC. and *Leucas ciliata* Benth. ex Wall. A population of 10 plants was observed at the type locality.

**Notes**

*Liparis tortilis* is morphologically similar to *L. odorata* (Willd.) Lindl., but differs from that species in having: two leaves (more than two leaves in *L. odorata*); spirally twisted inflorescence (erect, straight inflorescence in *L. odorata*); green colour flowers (yellow to purple colour in *L. odorata*), and obcordate lip with an apical notch (hastate and emarginated lip in *L. odorata*). It is noteworthy that *Liparis tortilis* is the only species of the genus with twisted inflorescence. In our opinion all these characters give good premises for describing *Liparis tortilis* as separate species.

Field surveys have located about ten individuals within the Aranamala Hills covering an area of 50 km². The threat status of this species has been assigned as ‘Critically Endangered’ as per the guidelines of IUCN (2011). Based on the above observations, adequate measures should be adopted to ensure the protection of this species in its natural habitat. Moreover, further surveys of this species are required. Apart from habitat destruction caused by anthropogenic intervention and wild fires during the summer, no other specific threats were determined during the field studies.

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REFERENCE


