SHORT COMMUNICATION

Commersonia corniculata (Malvaceae), a new name for C. cygnorum

The application of the name Lasiopetalum corniculatum Sm. (Malvaceae) has hitherto been uncertain (CHAH 2012). Upon describing this species, Smith (1812) provided the common name ‘Horned Woolly-blossom’ in reference to the petals having ‘linear points as long as the calyx’; however, species of Lasiopetalum Sm. have only small, scale-like petals, or lack petals altogether. He based his description on material collected by Archibald Menzies from ‘King George’s Sound’, a specimen of which is held in the Smith Herbarium at the Linnean Society of London. Examination of an image of this specimen (LINN-HS 403.5: http://linnean-online.org/31802/) has revealed that it is referable to the later-named Commersonia cygnorum Endl. (Steudel 1845).

Our interpretation of the type is largely based on our observation that its flowers have narrowly-ovate calyx lobes with an acute apex, and petals with linear ligules that equal or exceed the apex of the calyx (see description in Wilkins & Whitlock 2011). Commersonia borealis (E.Pritz.) C.F.Wilkins & Whitlock, the closest relative of C. cygnorum, also has long ligules but differs in part by having glabrous staminodes or with occasional hairs (cf. densely stellate hairy on the outer surface). While this feature is difficult to confirm from the image, our interpretation is supported by distributional data: C. cygnorum occurs in the Perth region and along the south-west coast of Western Australia, from east of Augusta to Cape Le Grand (including King George Sound), whereas C. borealis is found to the north of Perth, from Seabird to Shark Bay. Since L. corniculatum is the earliest legitimate name for this species, the following new combination is necessary.

Commersonia corniculata (Sm.) K.A.Sheph. & C.F.Wilkins, comb. nov.

Lasiopetalum corniculatum Sm. in A. Rees, Cycl. 20 (1812). Type citation: ‘Gathered by Mr Menzies, at King George’s Sound.’ Type specimen ‘King George’s Sound, west coast of New Holland [Western Australia]; lat. 35. Mr. Menzies. 1803 [1791]’ (lecto, here designated (or possible holo): LINN-HS 403.5 image!).


Notes. The designated lectotype, which is the only specimen from Menzies’ gathering that we are currently aware of, is annotated by Smith as ‘Bütterioídes No. 2. Lasiopetalum corniculatum Rulingea?’. Menzies visited King George Sound in 1791 during Vancouver’s Discovery expedition (George 2009): the date given on the specimen is likely to refer to the date the specimen was received by Smith.

Acknowledgements

Thanks to John Huisman and Juliet Wege for providing helpful comments on an earlier draft of this communication. The curation staff at PERTH are also gratefully acknowledged for their patience in dealing with the seemingly endless curatorial tasks that result from our ongoing research.

References


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