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A new *Platystele* (Orchidaceae, Pleurothallidinae) from the western mountains of Colombia

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Abstract

A new species of miniature orchid, *Platystele riograndense*, endemic to the Pacific slope of the western Cordillera, Municipality of Restrepo, Valle del Cauca, Colombia, is described and illustrated. *Platystele riograndense* is similar to *P. filamentosa*, but the new species has wider leaves, denser and shorter inflorescences and sigmoid (versus convex) lip. Ecological notes are provided. It is the second new species described of Canyon of Rio Grande new protected area in the last four years.

Resumen

Se describe e ilustra una nueva especie de orquídea miniatura *Platystele riograndense* endémica de la vertiente pacífica, de la cordillera occidental, Municipio de Restrepo, Valle del Cauca, Colombia. *Platystele riograndense* es similar a *P. filamentosa*, pero la nueva especie tiene hojas más anchas, inflorescencias más densas y cortas y labelo sigmoide (versus convexo). Notas ecológicas son aportadas. Se trata de la segunda nueva especie descrita para la nueva área protegida cañón de río Grande en los últimos cuatro años.

Key words: Río Grande canyon, Valle del Cauca, Dagua, Colombia, *Platystele filamentosa*, taxonomy

Introduction

The exclusively Neotropical genus *Platystele* Schlechter (1910: 565) (Orchidaceae: Pleurothallidinae) currently includes about 110 species (Karremans *et al.* 2016). Eighty percent of these have been described since Luer's first monograph on Pleurothallidinae in 1975 (Karremans & Davin 2017). The recent publication of additional novelties in the genus is highly indicative that its diversity is still far from fully understood (Baquero & Zuchan 2017; Jost & Iturralde 2017; Karremans & Bogarín 2017). From Colombia, Betancur *et al.* (2015) reported 49 species, about 45% of all the known species, of which 18 are endemic. An additional Colombian endemic species was published by Vieira-Uribe & Karremans (2017). The gaps of representative collections covering the countries' diverse geography are still large, suggesting future novelties will surely be found (Reina-Rodríguez *et al.* 2017).

The tiny plants and diminutive flowers of *Platystele* have undoubtedly contributed greatly to the gap in knowledge about species belonging to the genus. Not surprisingly, very little is known about their biology and ecology in general terms, and conservation, geographical distribution, species variation and pollination studies are virtually non-existent. DNA based phylogenetic studies indicated that *Platystele* belongs to the *Specklinia* Lindley (1830: 8) affinity (Karremans 2016). It is closely related to *Scaphosepalum* Pfitzer (1889: 136) and *Teagueia* Luer (1991: 105), altogether forming a clade that is sister to *Specklinia* and has the highest species diversity in the Andes of Colombia and Ecuador (Karremans *et al.* 2016). In general terms its species can be recognized by the small plants, the tiny flowers, which are frequently flat, with free and spreading sepals and petals, a simple lip with a basal glenion, a short column with an apical anther and bilobed stigma (Luer 1990).

While revising the flora from a public protected area in the Rio Grande canyon, an undescribed species belonging to the genus *Platystele* was discovered.

Materials and Methods

Several explorations were planned and executed in 2010, 2012 and 2013 with botanists and zoologists in the sub-Andean forests of the Colombian western mountain between the municipalities of Restrepo, Dagua, La Cumbre and Vijes in the Valle del Cauca department. The purpose was the characterization of the flora and fauna of the new protected area “Cañon de Río Grande”. Gentry plots (1982) were raised to sample different habitats. One of these plots contained the only specimen located to the present. Images of the flower *in situ* were achieved in successive years (March, 2012 and March, 2013). The specimen *typus* in spirit was photographed in CUVC! with a Cannon EOS 6D. The morphometric data was obtained with the Micro-Capture Software Ver. 2.0 (20×–200×). A comparison (see table 1) between *P. riograndense* and the *typus* specimen of *Platystele filamentosa* (Luer 1990:46) (*Dodson 18051*, MO!), collected in Ricaute (1820 m), Nariño, shows similarity in the color of the flower, however the morphological differences are clear between both taxa of the Colombian western mountains. Therefore, this population represented an undescribed taxon of *Platystele*. For accepted names we used Plants of the World Online, POWO (2017). Authors and names of plants follow The International Plant Name Index, IPNI (2017).

TABLE 1: Differences between *Platystele riograndense* and *Platystele filamentosa*, related taxa from the Colombian western mountains in terms of ecology and morphology.

Traits	<i>P. riograndense</i>	<i>P. filamentosa</i>
Abiotic conditions		
Geography	Valle del Cauca (center)	Nariño (south)
Life zone	Bh-PM (Holdridge 1987)	Bp-MB (Holdridge 1987)
Habitat	Relict cloud forest	Extense cloud forest
Elevation	1675	1820
Mean annual rainfall	1400–1600	3800–4000
Humidity (%)	82	91
Mean temperature (°C)	20.2	19.2
Morphology/phenology		
Biotype	Epiphyte	Epiphyte
Flowering	March	July
Leaf blade size (mm)	5	3–4
Leaf blade form	Rounded-spatulated	Elliptical-obovate
Apiculus size (mm)	0.5	Unknown
Inflorescence	Dense	Scattered
Inflorescence long (mm)	17	60
Sepals form	Oblong	Ovate
Dorsal sepal size (mm)	0.8–0.9	1.5
Lip form	Sigmoid	Convex-elliptical
Lip size (mm)	1.1–1.3	1.5
Lip tip	Obtuse	Acute

Results

Platystele riograndense Reina-Rodr. & Karremans *sp. nov.* (Figs. 1–3)

Diagnosis:—*Platystele riograndense* Reina-Rodr. & Karremans is similar to *P. filamentosa* Luer but the new species has broader leaves (5 vs 3–4 mm), a dense (versus loose) inflorescence that slightly exceeds the leaf (vs. more than twice the length of the leaf), denser and shorter inflorescences (17 vs. 60 mm long), narrowly oblong (vs. ovate) sepals, ligulate (vs. filamentose) petals, and a sigmoid (vs. convex), obtuse (vs. acute) lip.

Type:—COLOMBIA. Valle del Cauca: Municipio de Restrepo, Vereda Román, Cuenca alta del río Dagua, Distrito de Conservación de Suelos Cañon de río Grande, Reserva Natural de la Sociedad Civil Las 3R's, Bosque de Niebla. 1675 m, 30 de marzo 2013, Epífita miniatura, creciendo sobre *Spirotheca rhodostyla* Cuatrec., G. Reina-Rodríguez, T. Otero, N. Flanagan & F. López 1603 (holotype CUVC–Spirit).

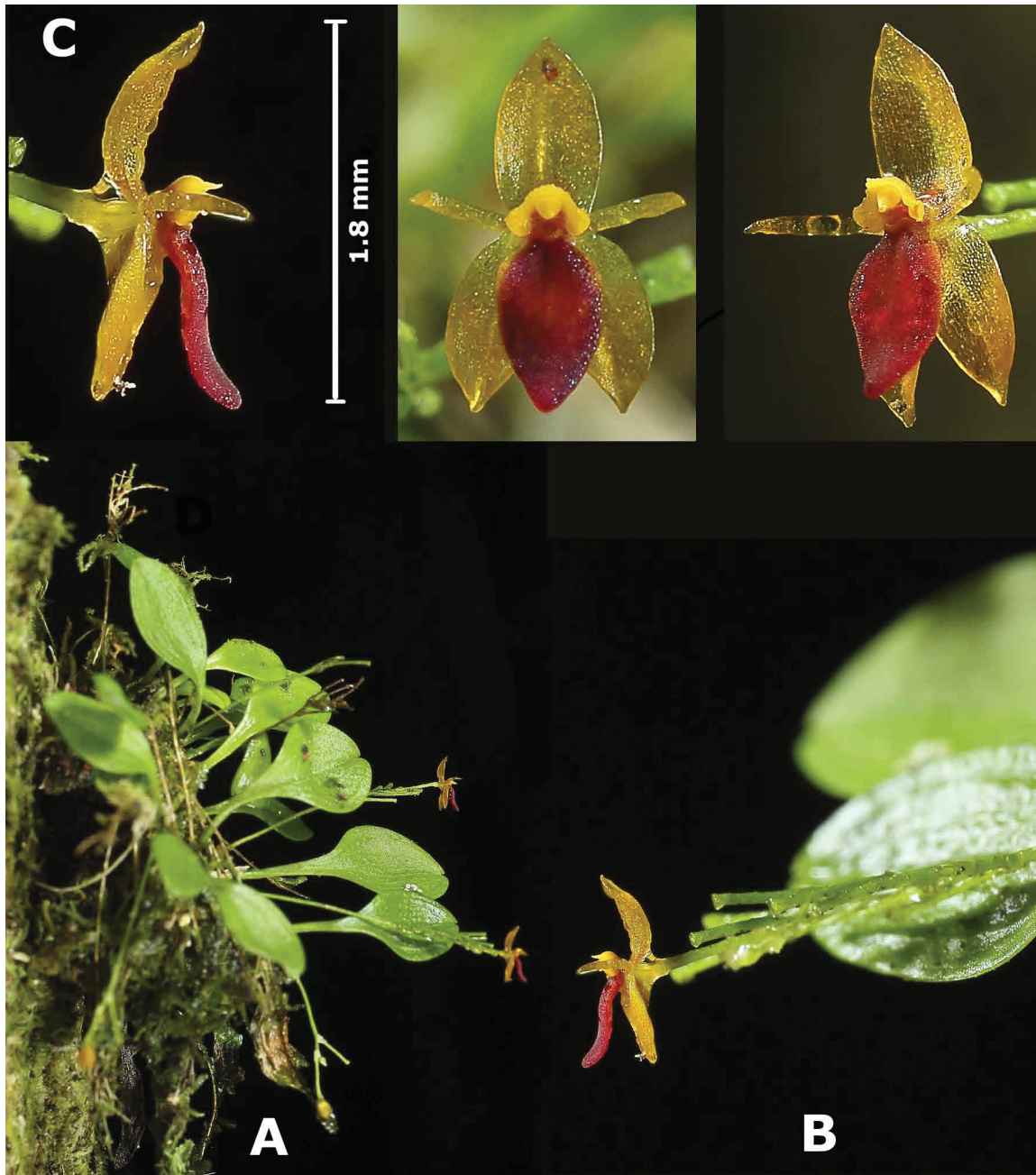


FIGURE 1. *Platystele riograndense* Reina-Rodr. & Karremans. A. Habit. B. Inflorescence. C. Lateral, frontal and 3/4 view of the flower. Photographs by F. López-Machado of the plant that served as type.

Description:—*Epiphytic plant*, caespitose, erect, up to 1.7 cm tall, including the inflorescence. *Roots* basal, swollen and sinuous up to 6 mm long. *Ramicauls* erect, short, enclosed by sheaths. *Sheaths* tubular, compressed, membranous, brownish with stretch marks up to 3.0–3.5 mm. *Leaf* blade 5 mm wide, rounded, 5-veined, spatulate, conduplicate, basally cuneate, which forms an angle of 135 degrees and terminating in a short apiculus, 0.5 mm. *Peduncle* 13–17 mm long, racemose, filiform and terete, shortly surpassing the leaf. *Pedicels* 2.5–3.0 mm, congested, distichous, teretes forming an angle of 15 degrees with the peduncle, with one flower produced at time by pedicel. *Ovary* 0.6 mm long with ribs. *Flower* 1.8 mm tall \times 1.5 mm wide, with the sepals, petals and column yellowish translucent, the lip red translucent. *Dorsal sepal* 0.8–0.9 \times 0.4–0.5 mm, narrowly oblongo-acuminate, margin smooth. *Lateral sepals* 1.0–1.2 \times 0.5–0.6 mm narrowly oblongo-acuminate, margin smooth 1-veined. *Petals* 1.2 \times 0.3 mm, filiform, and curve forward, smooth margin, acute. *Lip* 1.1–1.3 \times 0.5 mm, equal length of the lateral sepals, narrowly-ovate, convex, acute-rounded with the tip curve forward, margin smooth. *Column* short 0.4–0.5 mm long, distally apiculate, with lobules cucullate and margin fimbriate. *Anther* apical cucullate, pollinia two, laterally flattened. *Fruits* not seen.

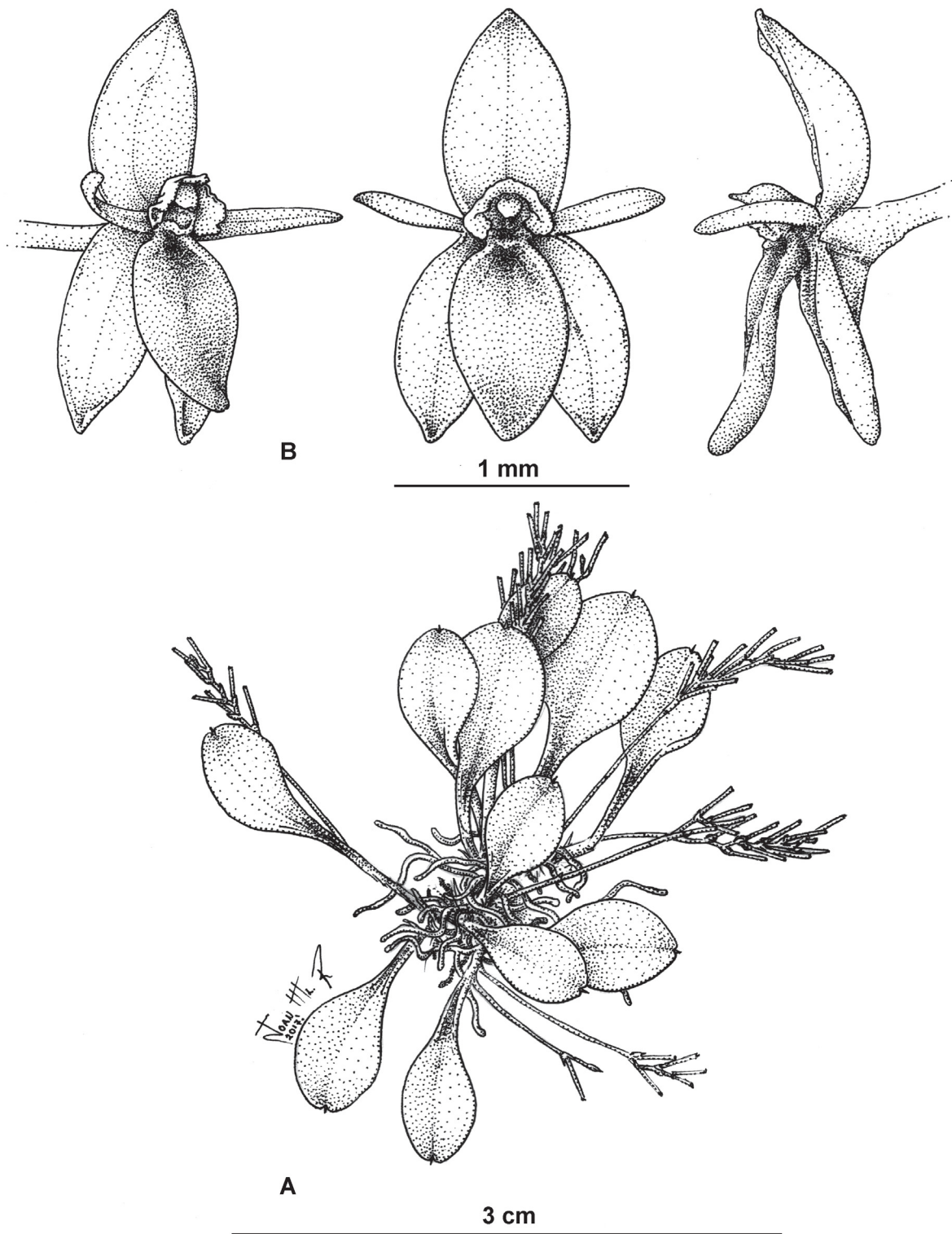


FIGURE 2. *Platystele riograndense* Reina-Rodr. & Karremans. A. Habit. B. Lateral, frontal and 3/4 view of the flower. Illustration by Joan Ramirez based on photographs by F. López-Machado and Maria C. Benavides-Guzman of the plant that served as type.

Eponymy:—The name honors the Rio Grande canyon, in the upper part of the Dagua river basin, between the municipalities of La Cumbre and Restrepo in Valle del Cauca, Colombia (Fig. 4). There the tropical dry forest and moist dense forest converge, and a public protected area of 10700 hectares has been recently created. The dense moist forest where the new species was discovered (Fig. 5) has been preserved by the Reina-Ramos family for more than a century.

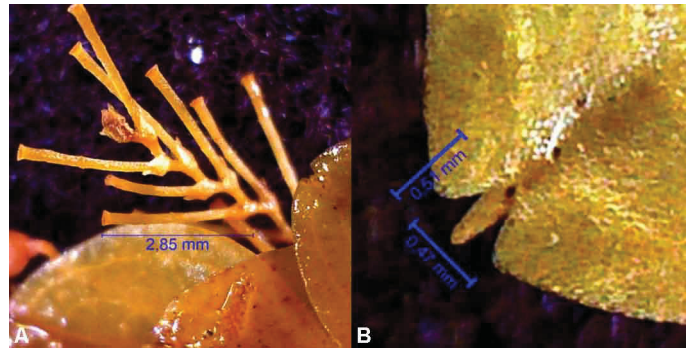


FIGURE 3. *Platystele riograndense* Reina-Rodr. & Karremans. A. Inflorescence. B. Leaf apex. Photographs by G. Reina-Rodríguez of the plant that served as type.

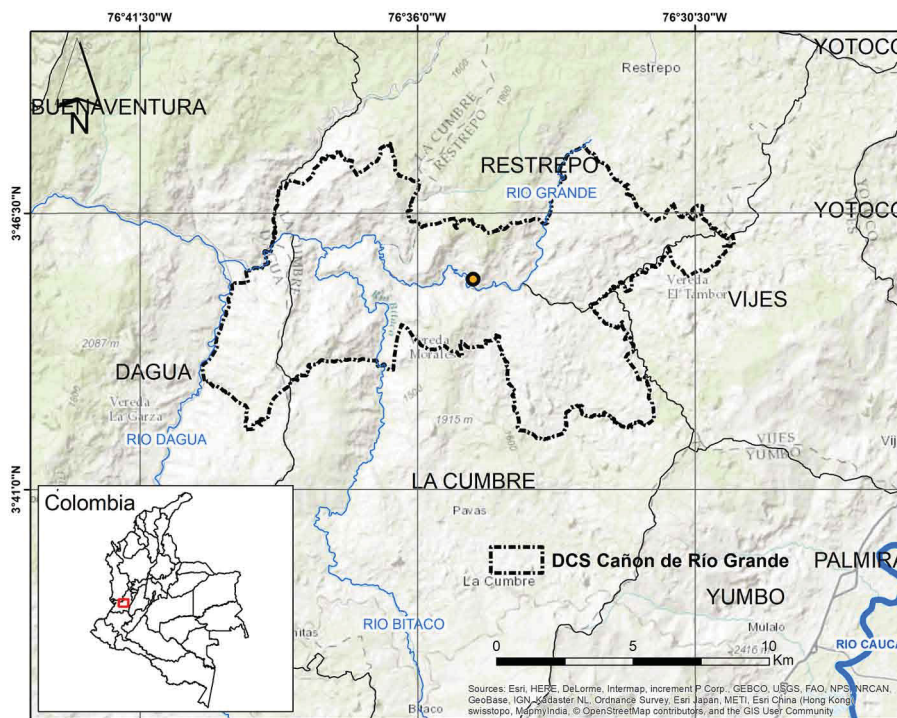


FIGURE 4. Location where the type specimen of *P. riograndense* was collected.

Phenology:—The plant was registered to flower in March *in situ*, coinciding with the beginning of the rainy season.

Ecology and distribution:—*Platystele riograndense* is currently known only from the type specimen. It was found growing upper part of the Dagua river basin, in the Valle del Cauca department of Colombia, growing at an elevation of about 1,675 m. The area has been classified as lower montane humid forest (Holdridge 1987), and reports precipitations between 1,400 and 1,600 mm. The average annual temperature is 18°C. The protected area—DCS—Cañón de río Grande of 10,700 hectares forms an altitudinal complex (geocomplex) *in sense* (Vigo 1998) from subxerophytic shrubs (710 m) to cloud dense forest (1,780 m). *Platystele riograndense* was found towards the upper part (at 1,675 m), in the summit zone, with sub-Andean flora whereas *P. filamentosa* Luer grows in more extensive and wet areas of primary Andean forest. (see table 1). The *P. riograndense* grows on *Spirotheca rhodostyla* Cuatrecasas (1945: 274–299) however, the *P. filamentosa* phorophyte is unknown. The *P. riograndense* vs. *P. longicaudata* flora canopy above 25 m high is dominated by *Poulsenia armata* (Miquel 1854: 197–200) Standley (1933: 4), *Cecropia telealba* Cuatrecasas (1945: 293), vs. *Elaeagia utilis* (Goudot 1844: 260) Weddell (1849: 94) and *Hieronyma oblonga* (Tulasne 1851: 248) Müller (1865: 66). Subdosel species (10–20 m) *Cosmibuena grandiflora* (Ruiz & Pavón 1799: 198) Rusby (1907: 368) and *Heliocarpus americanus* Linnaeus (1753: 448) vs. *Faramea calyprata* Taylor (1999: 280) and *Carapa guianensis* Aublet (1775a: 32). Shrub vegetation (<10 m). *Hedyosmum bonplandianum* Kunth (1825: 165) and *Palicourea thyrsoiflora* (Ruiz & Pavón 1799: 198) Candolle (1830: 528) vs. *Faramea coffeoides* Taylor (1999: 284)

and *Palicourea gibbosa* Dwyer (1980: 304) The palms community: *Prestoea decurrens* (H.Wendland ex Burret 1930: 123–270) Moore (1963: 286) and *Chamaedorea pinnatifrons* (Jacquin 1797: 1–68) Oersted (1858: 1–54) vs. *Prestoea acuminata* (Willdenow, 1804: 35) Moore (1963: 286) and *Aiphanes erinacea* (Karsten 1857: 391) Wendland (1878: 230). Also, there is a community of epiphytes dominated by *Tillandsia fendleri* Grisebach (1864: 17), *Tillandsia adpressa* André (1888a: 6), *Monstera adansonii* Schott (1830: 1028), *Anthurium scandens* (Aublet 1775b: 828–833) Engler (1878: 78) and *Guzmania scherzeriana* Mez (1896: 949) vs. *Philodendron verrucosum* Mathieu ex Schott (1856: 85), *Anthurium longicaudatum* Engler (1898: 388) and *Guzmania sprucei* (André 1888:b 5) Smith (1934: 75) (Fondo Acción *et al.* 2013; Velázquez *et al.* 2006).

This is the second new species discovered in the area in the last four years after *Encyclia parkeri* Reina-Rodríguez & Leopardi in Leopardi-Verdi *et al.* (2014: 164) from the middle part of basin.

Conservation status:—An assessment of its conservation status cannot be made at this time and has to be classified as data deficient (DD) because further information and research is required in the future to recognize their threat status (UICN 2012).

Discussion:—Important morphological differences were observed between *Platystele riograndense* and *P. filamentosa*, a dense (versus scattered) inflorescences (17 vs. 60 mm long) and sigmoid (versus convex) lip, narrowly oblong (vs. ovate) sepals, ligulate (vs. filamentose), and a sigmoid (vs. convex), obtuse (vs. acute) lip. In terms of biogeography, phenology, plants communities, habitat and abiotic conditions are presented in Table 1.

Additionally, *Platystele riograndense* differ from *P. filamentosa* in terms of: 1) Phenology flowering: March vs. July 2) Geography: Valle del Cauca (Center) vs. Nariño (South) 3) Life zone: Pre-montane wet forest vs. Montane rainy forest 4) Elevation: 1675 vs. 1820 m altitude 5) Mean annual rainfall: 1400–1600 vs. 3800–4000 6) Humidity 82% vs. 91% 7) Mean temperature 20.2 °C vs. 19.2 °C and 8) Ecological niche: The plants communities sampled in these locations are very different (Fondo Acción 2013, Velazquez *et al.* 2006).

Areas with similar conditions have been detected in the “Farallones de Cali National Park” and “Munchique National Park” booth on the Pacific slope, but with a huge flora gaps. These national parks have ecological conditions for the presence of both species.



FIGURE 5. Landscape and vegetation of the area where the type specimen of *P. riograndense* was collected. Photographs G. Reina-Rodríguez.

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