

***Pleurothallis vestigipetala* Luer, sp. nov.**

Planta parva epiphytica scandens, rhizomate erecto radicibus obtecto, caulibus abbreviatis unifoliatis, foliis coriaceis anguste ellipticis subacutis, racemo brevi paucifloro, floribus flavis tubulosis successivis ut videtur cleistogamis, sepalis ovato-oblongis acuminatis, petalis vestigialibus minutissimis ovatis ciliatis, labello elliptico marginibus lateralibus involutis extus minute pubescenti, columna grandi cylindrica apoda.

Plant small, epiphytic, scandent, the rhizome more or less erect, branching, producing a secondary stem about every 5 mm, concealed by descending roots and ascending secondary stems; roots slender, flexuous. Secondary stems terete, 3-5 mm long, with 1-2 thin, basal sheaths, unifoliolate. Leaves suberect, coriaceous, narrowly elliptical, subacute, apiculate, the base narrowly cuneate, indistinctly petiolate, 15-23 mm long, 3.5-5 mm wide. Inflorescence a short (2-3 cm), few-flowered (3-4), loose raceme; peduncle filiform, from a node on the secondary stem; floral bract 2-3 mm long; pedicel 2-4 mm long; ovary tripartite, 2.5 mm long; flowers yellow, tubular, the sepals not spreading, maturing singly and successively, each producing a capsule, presumably cleistogamous; dorsal sepal ovate, acuminate, acute, 6 mm long, 2 mm wide, faintly 3-veined, the mid-vein prominent; lateral sepals easily separable, oblong, acuminate, acute, 6 mm long, 1.5 mm wide, the mid-veins prominent; petals minute, ovate, ciliate, 0.6 mm long, 0.2 mm wide; lip translucent yellow, elliptical, the lateral margins involute, 2.75 mm long, 1.2 mm wide spread, minutely pubescent externally, glabrous within, the base membranous, cuneate, attached to the under surface of the base of the column; column large, cylindrical, 3 mm long, footless.

ETYMOLOGY: From the Latin *vestigialis*, "vestigial," and *petalum*, "petal," in allusion to the degenerate petals.

TYPE: *ECUADOR*: *AZUAY*: epiphytic in trees along the stream from Lake Zaragucho, 20 km west of Cuenca, alt. 3000 m, 2 March 1977, C. Luer, J. Luer & K. Cordoba 1496 (HOLOTYPE: SEL).

DISTRIBUTION: Southern Ecuador.

Both *Pleurothallis spiralis* and *P. vestigipetala* are shortly scandent in habit, resembling each other very closely except for the smaller size of the latter. A leafy axis is formed by the rhizome engulfed by secondary stems and twisting roots. The presumably cleistogamous flowers of *P. vestigipetala* mature successively on short, few-flowered racemes. Flowers from all stages of developing ovaries and maturing capsules were dissected. The sepals of mature flowers are easily separable, but at no time do they part except slightly near the apices. The large cylindrical column nearly fills the space within the flower. The stigma is located on the end just beneath the anther. The insignificant lip is curled beneath the column and attached to the footless base. The microscopic petals cling to the sides of the base of the column.

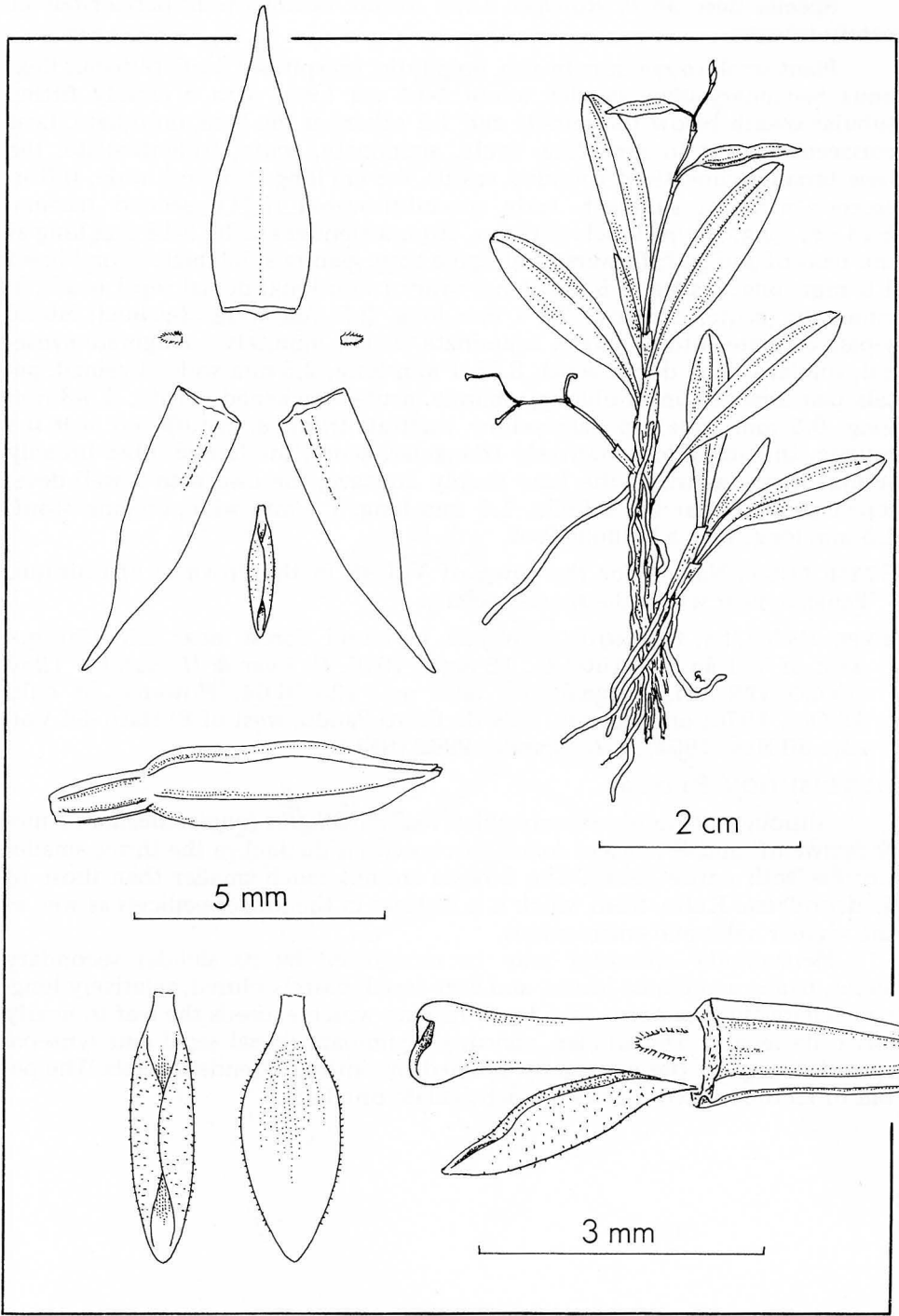


Figure 302. *PLEUROTHALLIS VESTIGIPETALA* Luer