

***Brachionidium ephemerum* Luer & Hirtz, sp. nov.**

Ety.: From the Latin *ephemerus*, "ephemeral," referring to the fleeting life of the flower.

Planta parva longirepens rhizomate gracili, pedunculo folio elliptico subaequilongo, sepalo mediano synsepaloque ovatis minutissime ciliatis acutis longicaudatis, petalis similibus sed parvioribus, labello transverse ovoideo, angulis lateralibus acutis, apice late obtuso, callo parvo pubescenti.

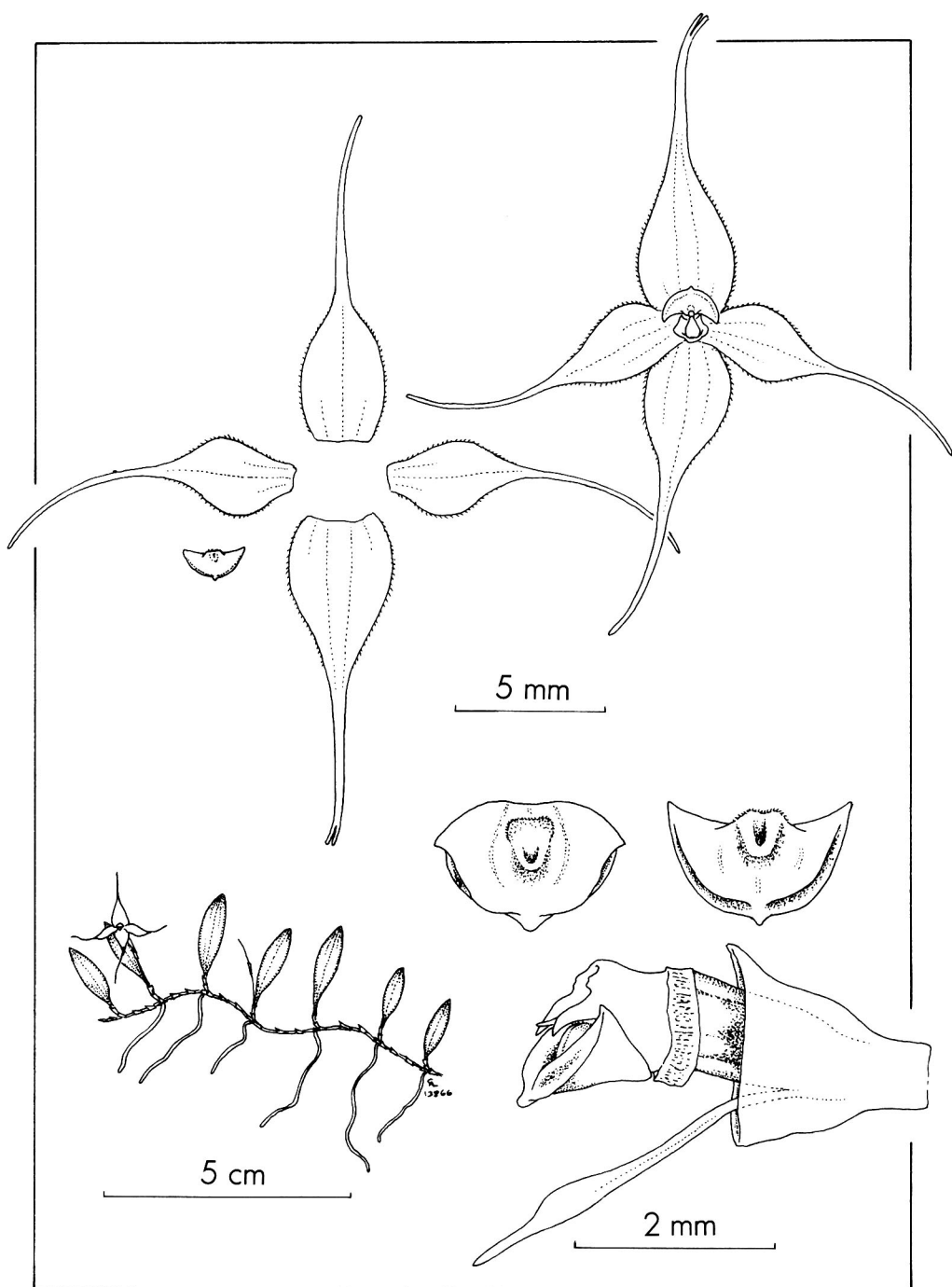
Plant small, epiphytic in loose moss, the rhizome comparatively slender, prostrate, long-repent, occasionally branching, up to 20 cm long, 0.8-2 cm long between ramicauls, enclosed by 3 imbricating sheaths; roots solitary from a node. Ramicauls suberect, 1-3 mm long, enclosed by 2 similar sheaths. Leaf suberect to erect, coriaceous, elliptical, acute, 8-15 mm long, 4-5 mm wide, 3- to 5-veined, the base cuneate into the petiole. Inflorescence a single, non-resupinate, translucent purple, ephemeral flower borne by a slender, erect peduncle 9-11 mm long, with a bract near the middle and another at the base; floral bract infundibular, mucronate, 2.5 mm long, enclosing the pedicel and ovary; pedicel 0.5 mm long, with a filament 4 mm long; sepals minutely short-ciliate, the blade of the middle sepal elliptical, 4.5 mm long, 3 mm wide, 3-veined, the apex acute, long-acuminate into a filiform tail 6.5 mm long, the lateral sepals connate into an ovate lamina 5.5 mm long, 3.5 mm wide, 4-veined, the apex acute, long-acuminate into a tail 5.5 mm long, bifid at the tip; petals minutely ciliate, ovate, oblique, 4.5 mm long 2.25 mm wide, 3-veined, the apex acute, acuminate into a filiform tail 5.5 mm long; lip transversely subovoid, thick, 1 mm long, 2 mm wide, the lateral angles acute, the apex broadly obtuse, the margins callous and channelled along the edge, the disc with an entire, ovoid, pubescent callus with a glenion; column stout, 1 mm long; pollinia 6.

ECUADOR: Prov. of Morona-Santiago: epiphytic in wet forest southeast of Sigsig, alt. 2400 m, 13 Jan. 1989, C. Luer, J. Luer, P. Jesup, A. Jesup, A. Hirtz & S. Ortega 13866 (Holotype: MO). Prov. of Zamora-Chinchi: Nudo de Sabanilla, elfin forest at pass above Valladolid, alt. 2800 m, 4 Feb. 1985, G. Harling & L. Andersson 21567 (GB, MO); Parque Nacional Podocarpus, east of Nudo de Cajanuma, alt. 2900 m, 31 Jan. 1989, J. E. Madsen 85750 (AAU, QCA).

This fragile, little species is endemic in eastern Ecuador at high altitudes. Plants creep in the loose, wet humus at the base of and on the trunks of large trees. Sterile specimens had been discovered several times before a usable flower was finally found. Common to similar species, the delicate flowers last but a short time.

*Brachionidium ephemerum* is distinguished by the long-repent habit with small, erect, elliptical leaves, and comparatively short peduncles. The sepals and petals are translucent, minutely ciliate and long-tailed. The lateral angles of the transverse, bimarginate lip are acute and the callus is small and entire. It is most similar to the vegetatively larger *B. ecuadorense*, from which it is distinguished by the slender sepaline tails.



Plate 18. *Brachionidium ephemereum* Luer & Hirtz