

Pleurothallis georgei Luer, sp. nov.

Planta epiphytica caespitosa mediocris, caulibus secundariis gracilibus teretibus vaginis hispidis, foliis coriaceis parvis anguste ellipticis breviter petiolatis, floribus solitariis successivis vinaceis, bracteis et ovariis pubescentibus, sepalo dorsali ovato acuto, sepalis lateralibus subfalcatis acutis, prope basin pubescentibus et laete adhaerentibus, cum pede columnae mentum formantibus, petalis ovatis supra medium abrupte angustatis trinerviis, labello trilobo bicarinato, lobo medio rotundato apiculato, lobis lateralibus late falcatis, base unguiculata bidentata.

Plant epiphytic, caespitose, medium in size; roots filiform, flexuous. Secondary stem slender, terete, spreading to erect, to 28 cm long, clothed by 5-6 imbricating, fugacious, hispid sheaths, unifoliolate. Leaf coriaceous, narrowly elliptical, acute, tridenticulate, base cuneate, shortly petiolate, 5-7.5 × 1-1.8 cm with the petiole 5-6 mm long. Inflorescence fasciculate, flowers red-purple, produced singly and successively from a fugacious spathe at the apex of the stem where a dense fascicle of old peduncles remain; floral bract light brown with brown spicules, 6 mm long; pedicel yellow, pubescent, 7 mm long; ovary red, pubescent, 1.5-2 mm long; dorsal sepal ovate, acute, 5 × 2.5 mm; lateral sepals oblong, subfalcate, acute, pubescent and lightly adherent below the middle to form a mentum with the column-foot, each 4 × 1.5-2 mm; petals white, ovate and oblique below the middle, abruptly narrowed near the middle to a red narrowly triangular, acute apex, 4 × 1.5 mm, with 3 prominent veins; lip maroon, edged in pink, 3-lobed, 2.5 × 2 mm spread; middle lobe oblong, 1 mm long, rounded, apiculate, lateral lobes broad, erect, embracing the column, broadly falcate, rounded, abruptly acuminate near the junction with the middle lobe, base shortly unguiculate, with a pair of incurved basal teeth, disc thickened with a pair of rounded elevations at the base and a pair of low carinae just above the middle; column rose, terete, thick, 2 mm long, with a concave foot about 1 mm long.

ETYMOLOGY: Named in honor of its discoverer, George Mather Luer.

TYPE: ECUADOR: MORONA-SANTIAGO: epiphytic in felled trees about 30 km south of Gualaquiza, alt. 500 m, 6 Aug. 1975, C. Luer, G. Luer & Wilhelm 451 (HOLOTYPE: SEL).

DISTRIBUTION: Ecuador.

We owe the discovery of this species to George Luer, who not only encouraged the side-trip to Gualaquiza, but also spied the spot and sparked a long climb up a steep slope to reach some recently felled trees at the edge of the montane rain forest. From the epiphyte-laden limbs of the fallen giants this collecting foray produced about 25 different species of pleurothallids, more than one of which is proving to be new to botanical science.

Only one plant of *Pleurothallis georgei* was found. It consists of a more or less spreading rosette of slender stems with hispid sheaths. Each stem bears a small leathery leaf and at the base of the short petiole, a dense cluster of old dried peduncles. From this fascicle the flowers are produced singly at intermittent intervals. One stem was sacrificed for the herbarium and the plant itself is thriving and flowering in the "cool" house of the Marie Selby Botanical Gardens.

The morphology of the flowers suggests a close relationship with *P. ceratothallis* Rchb.f. from Venezuela. I thought it might be a geographical

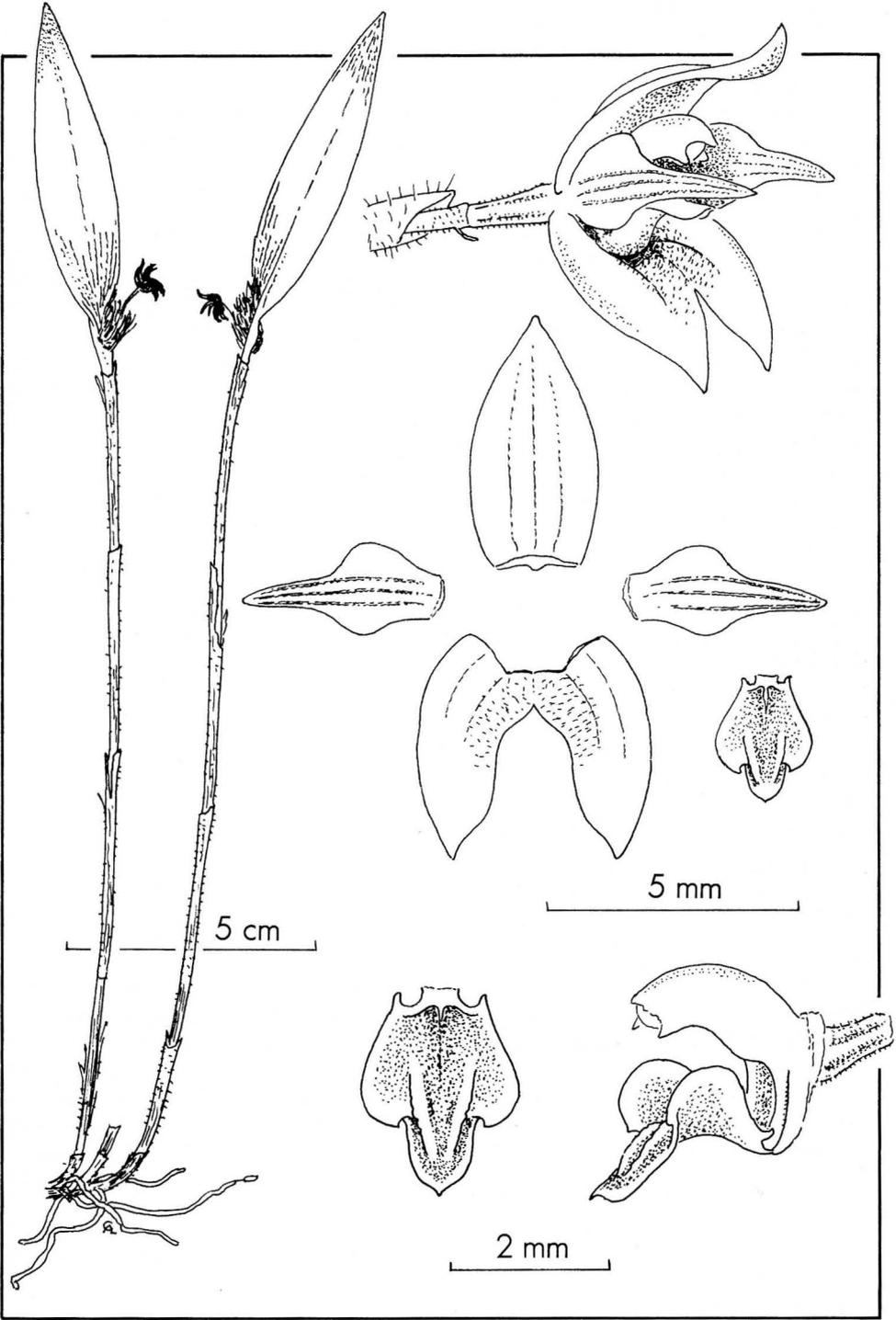


Figure 58. *PLEUROTHALLIS GEORGEI* Luer

variant, but Garay believes that it is specifically distinct. It differs from *P. ceratohallis* in its smaller habit, terete (not compressed) secondary stems clothed by hispid sheaths, its small, elliptical, petiolate leaf without a prominent mid-rib, and its small, bright purple flowers with broader petals, lip with a shorter apiculate mid-lobe, and broader, rounder lateral lobes.