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Cordia vestita (A.DC.) Hook.f. & Thomson. New Addition to the flora of the Southern Eastern Ghats, Tamil Nadu, India

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Abstract

Cordia vestita (A.DC.) Hook.f. & Thomson is reported for the first time from Tamil Nadu, representing a significant extension of its known distribution into the Southern Eastern Ghats. The species was recorded in tropical dry forest vegetation at an elevation of only 73 m above sea level. This occurrence represents a previously undocumented extension of its geographical and ecological range, suggesting its potential adaptation to tropical dry forest habitats at lower elevations than previously reported. *C. vestita* is currently categorised as Data Deficient (DD). This new distribution record highlights the importance of continued floristic surveys and conservation assessment in the Southern Eastern Ghats.

Keywords: New distribution, Taxonomy, Equisetopsida, Boraginales, Boraginaceae, Tamil Nadu.

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Introduction

The family *Boraginaceae* Juss. was established by the French botanist Antoine-Laurent de Jussieu in 1789. The family comprises 154 accepted genera, including *Cordia* L., which was first published by the Swedish botanist and physician Carl Linnaeus in 1753. *Cordia* is one of the largest genera in the family (Gottschling *et al.*, 2005) and comprises 229 accepted species worldwide. The genus is distributed throughout the Neotropics and Pantropics in Mexico and Central America, the West Indies, and South America (POWO, 2026). In India, 12 species were reported by Henry *et al.* (1987); with the description of *Cordia ramanujamii* N. Balachandran & K. Rajendiran, the number increased to 13 species (Balachandran & Rajendiran, 2016).

Materials and methods

During ongoing botanical exploration of Sanjeevi Hill, Panamalai Pettai, an unprotected area of the Southern Eastern Ghats, the first author encountered an interesting species of the genus *Cordia* L. The specimen was critically examined against relevant taxonomic literature and authenticated herbarium specimens and identified as *Cordia vestita* (A.DC.) Hook.f. & Thomson. The present study confirms the occurrence of *C. vestita* in Tamil Nadu for the first time, representing a new distributional record for the state and an addition to the flora of the Southern Eastern Ghats.

TAXONOMIC TREATMENT

Cordia vestita (A.DC.) Hook.f. & Thomson (Figure 1,2)

Homotypic Synonyms: *Gerascanthus vestitus* (A.DC.) Borhidi in Acta Bot. Hung. 34: 407 (1988), *Gynaion vestitum* A.DC. in A.P.de Candolle, Prodr. 9: 468 (1845). Heterotypic Synonyms: *Cordia incana* Royle in Ill. Bot. Himal. Mts.: 306 (1836), nom. nud. *Lithocardium vestitum* Kuntze in Revis. Gen. Pl. 2: 977 (1891)

Description: Deciduous, polygamous woody shrub, up to 3 m tall. Stem terete, solid, densely tomentose when young, becoming glabrous at maturity. Leaves cauline and rameal, alternate, simple, dark green on the adaxial surface and pale green on the abaxial surface; lamina broadly ovate, elliptic to obovate, 6–12 × 4–8 cm, apex acute to obtuse, base rounded, margin entire to slightly undulate; adaxial surface scabrous, abaxial surface glabrous; petiole 3–5 cm long. Inflorescence: dense compound cymes; flowers 0.8–1.2 cm long, actinomorphic, pentamerous, hypogynous; pedicels 4–6 mm, covered with dense, tomentose, brown. Calyx gamosepalous, obconic, 0.6–1 cm long; outer surface densely tomentose when young, becoming glabrous at maturity, yellowish-brown. Corolla gamopetalous, actinomorphic, tubular, white, with valvate aestivation; lobes 5, obovate to oblanceolate, apex obtuse, margin undulate, glabrous. Anther 5, filaments 2–4 mm long. Gynoecium bicarpellary, syncarpous; ovary superior; style 2–4 mm long; stigma bifid. Drupe ovoid to ellipsoid, yellow, glabrous, with a persistent style at the apex, 1-seeded; seed ovoid.

Phenology: Flowering and fruiting occur from November to February in Tamil Nadu.

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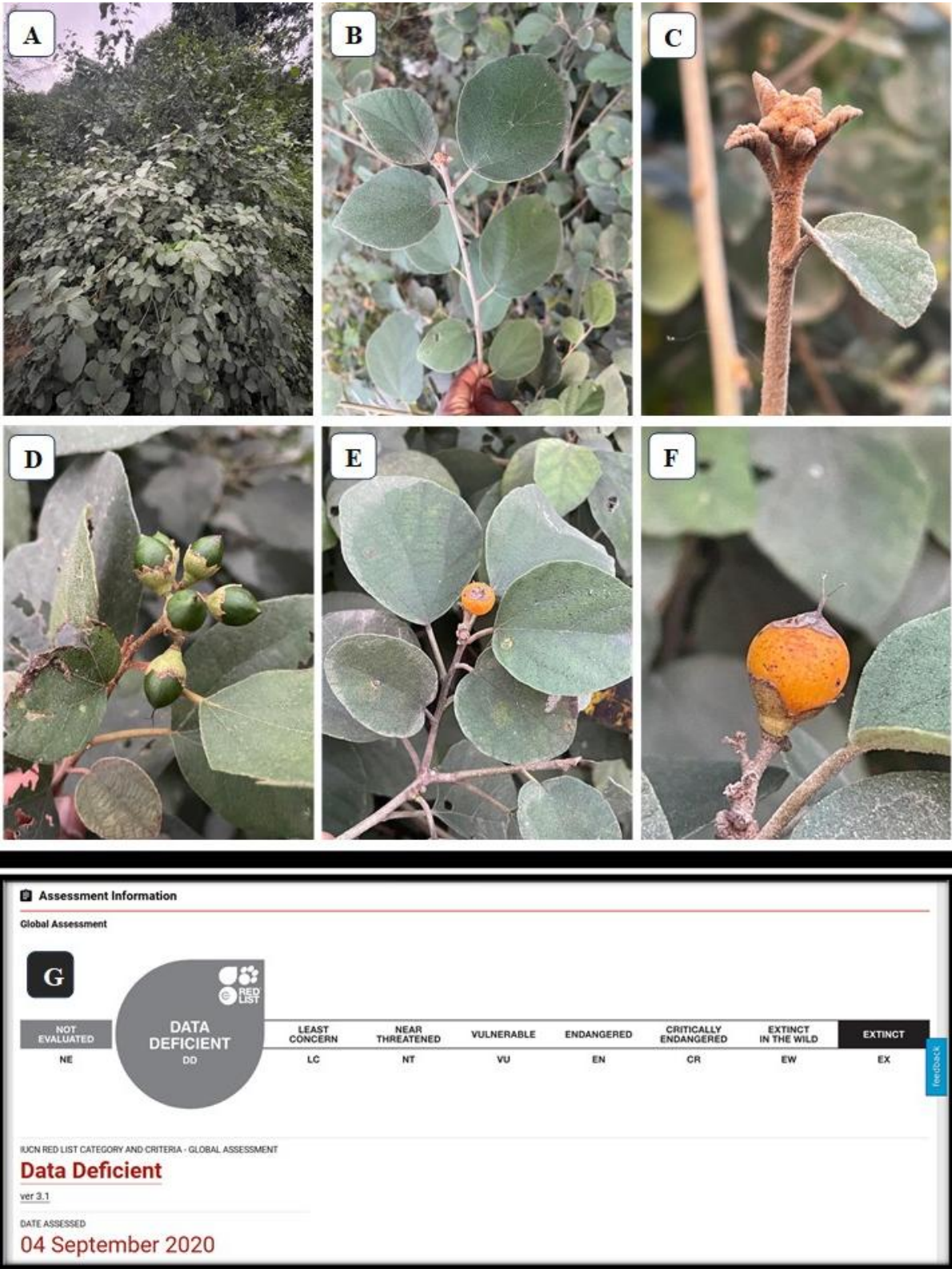


Figure 1. A) Habit; B) Mature twig; C) Bud; D) Cluster of immature fruit; E & F) Mature fruit of *Cordia vestita* (Photo credit: Sugaseelan Akash).

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Distribution: India, Pakistan, West Himalaya, and North-West India, extending from North-East Pakistan to the West Himalaya and North-West India. In India, it has been reported in Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, and Uttar Pradesh (Rao and Kumar, 2026). In the present study, the species is reported for the first time from Tamil Nadu, where it occurs in tropical dry forest vegetation and is associated with *Senegalia catechu* (L.f.) P.J.H.Hurter & Mabb., *Lantana camara* L., *Neltuma juliflora* (Sw.) Raf., *Combretum albidum* G.Don.

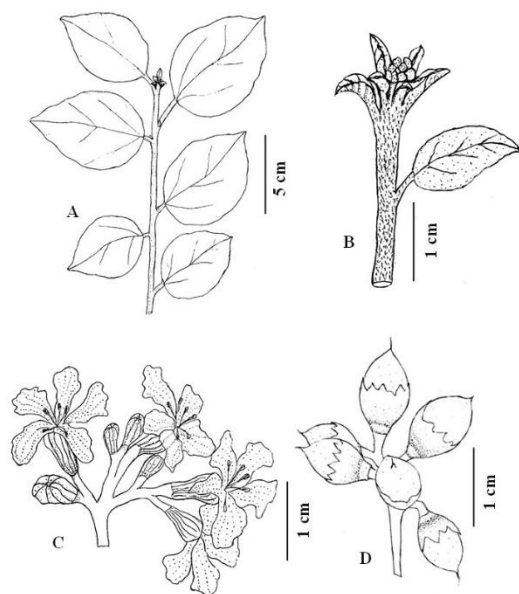


Figure 2. A) Mature twig; B) Shoot tip; C) Inflorescence; D) Fruit (Photo credit: Selvam Srikanth & Sugaseelan Akash).

Conservation status: *Cordia vestita* was most recently assessed for the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species in 2020 and is currently categorised as Data Deficient (DD) (Crowley, 2021). In the present study, 176 individuals were recorded, with an estimated Area of Occupancy (AOO) of 28 km² and Extent of Occurrence (EOO) of 10 km². The species is subject to anthropogenic threats, including the illegal collection of fuelwood and grazing. Further field surveys and population assessments are required to determine its distribution, population size, habitat status, and potential threats.

Vernacular names: Bairola, Bateuta, Baurala, Kum, and Kumbhi (Hindi). In Tamil, the plant is locally known as Kaatunaruveli and Peinaruvili.

Specimen examined: India, Tamil Nadu, Viluppuram District, Southern Eastern Ghats, Panamalai Pettai, Sanjeevi Hill, 12°05'15.5"N 79°22'22.4"E; 55 m elev., S. Akash, K. Manikandan and A. Rajesh 122 (RHT!).

Discussion

The species is native to India, Pakistan, and the Western Himalaya and is primarily distributed at elevations ranging from 300 to 1,000 m above sea level (Rao and Kumar, 2026). In the present study, the species is reported

for the first time from a tropical dry forest at a relatively low elevation of 73 m above sea level. Previous studies in the study area resulted in the discovery and description of a new species, *Cyphostemma annamalaii* S. Akash, K. Manikandan & A. Rajesh (Akash *et al.*, 2026). The recent floristic study in the vicinity of Karuvatchi Hill recorded 202 species belonging to 156 genera and 51 families (Bharathi *et al.*, 2026).

Conclusion

The occurrence of *Cordia vestita* in the Southern Eastern Ghats of Tamil Nadu represents a previously undocumented extension of its geographical and ecological range, with the species potentially adapted to the tropical dry forest habitat at lower elevations than previously reported.

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