

# A new species of *Aeranthès* (Orchidaceae) from the Comoro Islands

**Johan HERMANS**

Honorary Research Associate, Royal Botanic Gardens Kew,  
Richmond, Surrey, TW9 3AE, U.K.  
jhermans@museumoflondon.org.uk

**Jean BOSSER**

IRD, Département Systématique et Évolution, Phanérogamie,  
Muséum national d'Histoire naturelle,  
16 rue Buffon, 75005 Paris, France.

## ABSTRACT

**KEY WORDS**  
Orchidaceae,  
*Aeranthès*,  
Comoro Islands.

*Aeranthès campbelliae* (Orchidaceae) is described from the Comoro Islands. It resembles *A. ecalcarata* H. Perrier, endemic to Madagascar, by its lip and spur, but differs by its oblong and flat leaves (vs. linear and canaliculate) and its racemose, many flowered, more robust inflorescences.

## RÉSUMÉ

**MOTS CLÉS**  
Orchidaceae,  
*Aeranthès*,  
Comores.

*Une nouvelle espèce d'Aeranthès (Orchidaceae) des Comores.*  
Description d'*Aeranthès campbelliae* (Orchidaceae) des Comores. Proche de *Aeranthès ecalcarata* H. Perrier, endémique de Madagascar, par le labelle et l'éperon très court, se distingue par ses feuilles à limbe large et plan, non filiforme et canaliculé dessus et par ses inflorescences racémeuses pluriflores à axe et pédoncule robustes.

## INTRODUCTION

A few plants of this previously undescribed species have been in cultivation for many years, both in the United Kingdom and Kenya. They originate from a 1985 collection made on the Island of Grande Comore. The flowers are very distinct in having a spur which is reduced to a small swelling at the base of the mentum.

***Aeranthès campbelliae* Hermans & Bosser, sp. nov.**

*Affinis* *Aeranthès ecalcarata* H. Perrier *sed habitu majore, foliis oblongis 3-8 mm latis in flabello dispositis, inflorescentiis 2-4-floribus, bracteis maioribus 3 mm longis, labello ovato calvari obscure conico satis distinguenda.*

TYPUS. — *Hermans 3915*, Comoro Islands (holo-, K!).

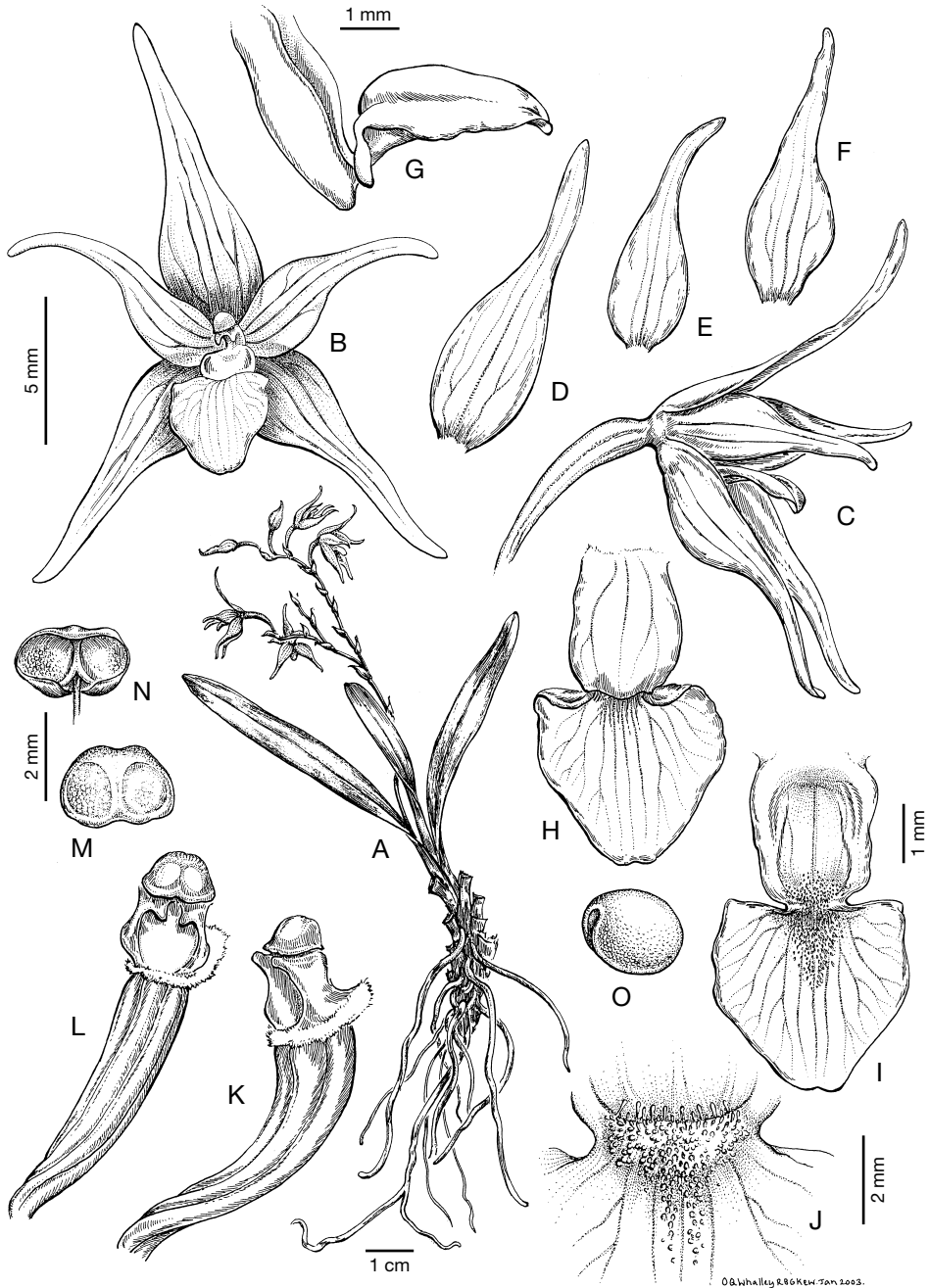


Fig. 1. — *Aeranthes campbelliae*: A, habit; B, flower, front; C, flower, side; D, dorsal sepal; E, petal; F, lateral sepals; G, column-foot and lip, side; H, column foot and lip, under; I, column foot and lip, above; J, base of lip, papilli, calli; K, ovary and column, side; L, ovary and column, front; M, anther cap, front; N, anther cap, under; O, pollinium. All drawn by Olivier WHALLEY from the type collection.

A small-sized erect epiphyte, up to 90 mm tall. Stem simple, leafy, flattened, 2-3 mm in diam.; roots 1 mm in diam., smooth. Leaves 3-6, persistent, narrowly oblong, 40 to 62 mm long, 3 to 8 mm broad. Inflorescences several, racemose, 2- to occasionally 4-6-flowered, with an undeveloped terminal bud, erect, axillary; peduncle wiry, terete, up to 85 mm long, 0.6 mm in diam., normally simple, occasionally few-branched, with at the base a tubular sheath 4-6 mm long, 0.8 to 1 mm wide, bearing above 2-3 further sheaths partly covering the internodes; floral bracts 3 mm long, 1 mm wide. Flowers 12-14 mm tall, 9-11 mm wide, 8 mm deep, translucent greenish-white, with a few microscopic black specks on the exterior, the lip and tails of petals and lateral sepals more yellowish-white, column green; tepals with 3 obscure veins and a few shorter veinlets towards the margin; ovary pedicellate, 7 mm long, 0.9 to 1.2 mm at the widest point, roundly ridged, with some small dark-brown specks towards the base. Dorsal sepal 11 mm long, 3 mm wide, oblong-ovate, tip slightly obtuse, erect to slightly leaning forward. Lateral sepals spreading, 11 mm long, 4 mm wide, ovate, long acuminate into a tail c. 6 mm long. Petals slightly reflexed at the tip, 9 mm long, 2.8 mm wide, ovate, long acuminate into a tail c. 3 mm long. Lip broadly oval, 4.6 mm long, 3.8 mm wide, articulate to the column-foot, mobile, auriculate at the base, forming two rounded swellings, base of the disk farinose and papillose, with three central veins converging toward the tip, a further 2-3 veins branching towards the margin; spur very short, rounded and almost indistinct from the column-foot and mentum, 1 × 1 mm. Column short and semi-rectangular, somewhat thickened at the apex, 1.2 mm long, 0.9 mm broad, 1 mm high; rostellum indistinctly bi-lobed; column-foot boat-shaped, very slightly

inflated and continuous with the short spur; anther cap 0.8 mm wide, 0.8 mm high, white, membranous and globular; pollinia porate, globular, 0.3 mm in diam., with a short thread-like viscidium, waxy, yellow. Fruit unknown.

**DISTRIBUTION.** — Endemic to the Comoro Islands, Grande Comore.

**ETYMOLOGY.** — Named for Heather CAMPBELL, who propagated plants of this new species, originally collected by Mrs. Jean CLASSEN.

*Aeranthes campbelliae* has flowers similar in shape to those of *Aeranthes ecalcarata* H. Perrier, which is endemic to Madagascar and the only other species of the genus lacking a distinct spur. Although several collections of *A. campbelliae* have flowers that are larger than those of the Madagascan species, those of some other specimens are almost identical in size. The main difference between the two species is in the leaves and the inflorescences. In *A. ecalcarata* the leaves are narrowly linear, canaliculate on top, and the inflorescences have very slender peduncles with a few sheaths only and bearing 1 to 2 flowers at the tip. In *A. campbelliae* the leaves are fan-shaped and narrowly oblong, and the inflorescences have a more robust raceme with more prominent sheaths, sometimes bearing more flowers. One could regard the Comorean plant a subspecies of *A. ecalcarata*, but considering its important differences in the inflorescence and the leaves, it is described here as a distinct species.

### Acknowledgements

We would like to thank Dr. Phillip CRIBB for checking the manuscript and for helpful advice, Heather CAMPBELL for donating the plant, and Oliver WHALLEY for the fine illustration.

*Manuscript received 17 July 2003;  
revised version accepted 21 August 2003.*