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NEW DISTRIBUTION RECORD OF THE ENDEMIC AND RARE *FICUS DALHOUSIAE* MIQ. (MORACEAE)

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During the botanical explorations in Kunthi Betta near Pandavapura of Mandya District (Karnataka State), the authors came across an interesting species of *Ficus* of the family Moraceae growing in rock crevices. On careful examination and extended search, this turned out to be *Ficus dalhousiae* Miq. (Image 1). Interestingly, it is a species endemic to peninsular India (Ahmedullah & Nayar 1986) and a very rare species (Sukumaran et al. 2008). Miquel (1847) first described this species as *Urostigma dalhousiae* based on Wight's collection from India and later (1867) he renamed it as *Ficus dalhousiae*. Subsequently, King (1888), Hooker (1890), Brandis (1906) and Gamble (1928) recorded this species from the Nilgiri Mountains in the altitudinal range of 605–1,370 m. This species has been reported from many parts of Kerala (Bourdillon 1908; Corner 1965; Nayar et al. 2006; Sasidharan, 2006), Tamil Nadu (Henry et al. 1987; Sukuraman et al. 2008) and Andhra Pradesh (Pullaiah & Rani 1999). So far, this species has not been reported from Karnataka. Therefore, the present sighting in

Kunthi Betta near Pandavapura forms a new distribution record for Karnataka (Image 2). It is briefly described here with phenological data, its distribution, a specimen examined and notes for a better understanding of the species. A voucher specimen (Image 3) has been deposited by the authors (KBF 1001) in the herbarium of the Department of Studies in Botany (MGM), University of Mysore, Manasagangotri, Mysuru.

Ficus dalhousiae Miq.

in Ann. Mus. Bot. Lugduno-Batavi. 3: 285. 1867; Hooker in Fl. Brit. India. 5: 499. 1890; Gamble in FPM. Repr. ed. 3:1364. 1998. *Urostigma dalhousiae* Miq. in London J. Bot. 6:571. 1847.

Specimen examined: KBF-1001, 01.xi.2008, hill top of Kunthi Betta (12.5061°N & 76.6925°E), near Pandavapura (Mandya District), Karnataka (India), coll. K.K. Sampath Kumara, A.N. Sringswara, K.B. Sadananda. We observed only a single tree of *F. dalhousiae* in the study area.

Description: A small spreading tree; young branches softly pubescent. Leaves ovate-elliptic to broadly ovate, white pubescent below; apex shortly acuminate; base more or less deeply cordate, up to 30cm long and 20cm broad; primary nerves 10–14 pairs, prominent below; petioles up to 10cm long. Receptacles in pairs, shortly peduncled, obovoid, pubescent, about 1.5cm in diameter, with three apical scales and three bifid basal bracts.

Habitat: Rocky hill top of dry deciduous forest.

Phenology: September–February.

Distribution: Peninsular India: Andhra Pradesh, Tamil

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Image 1. *Ficus dalhousiae* Miq. tree branches bearing receptacles

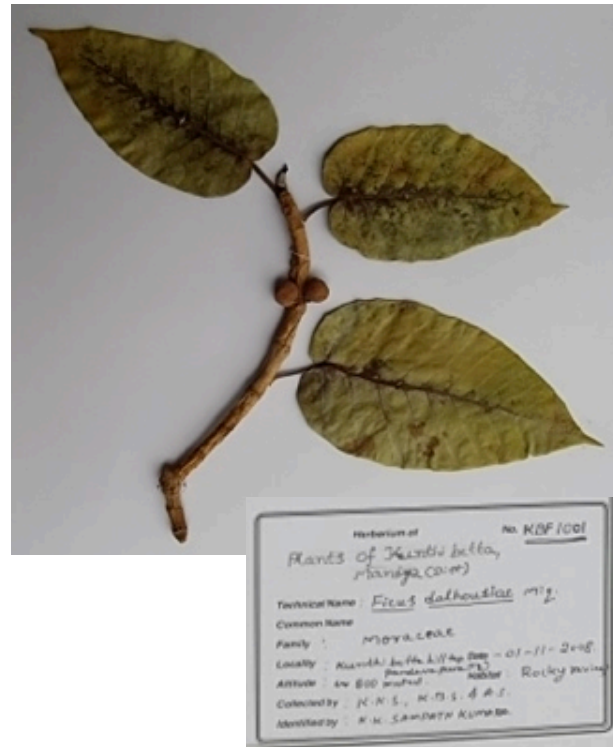


Image 3. *Ficus dalhousiae* Miq. herbarium specimen

Nadu, Kerala and Karnataka. Endemic and very rare.

Discussion: The sighting of only one tree of *F. dalhousiae* in the study area indicates its rarity. We have also sighted a few trees of this species growing on the rocky hill tops of Savanadurga (Ramanagaram District of Karnataka) and Siddara Betta (Tumkur District of Karnataka). Wherever it grows, its population size is very small and probably that is the reason for its inclusion

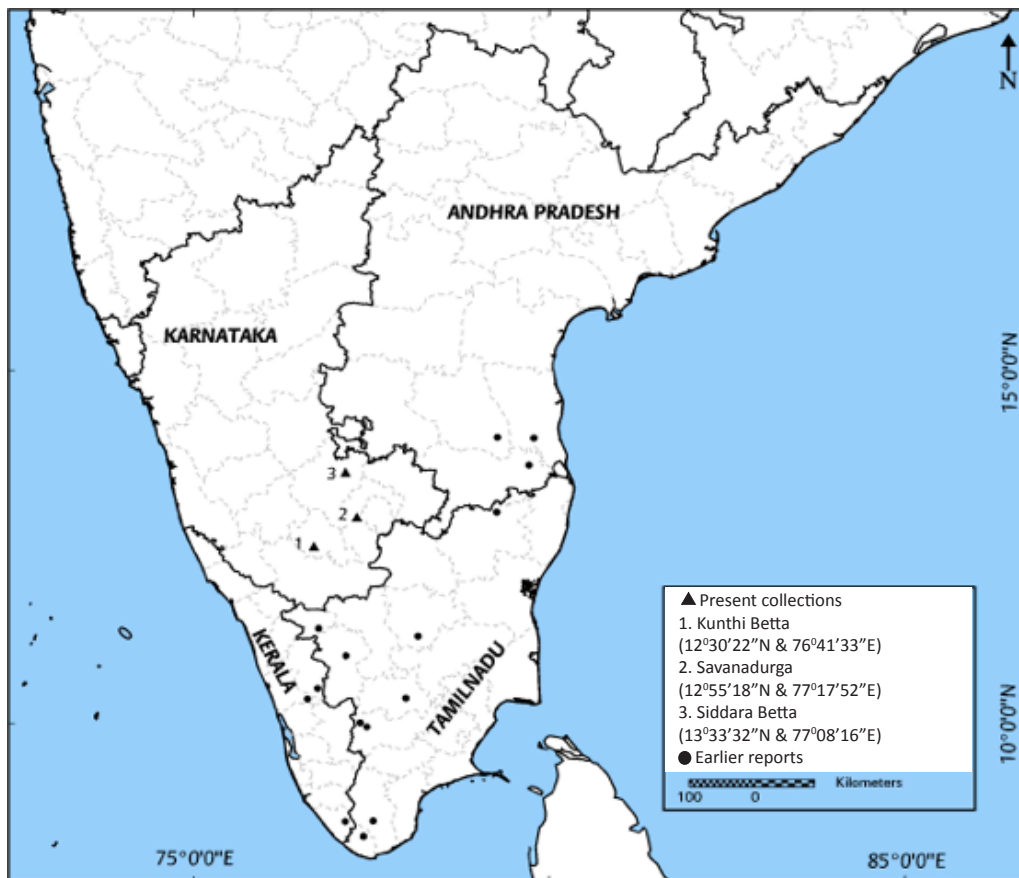


Image 2. Map showing the distribution of *Ficus dalhousiae* Miq.

under the very rare category in the threatened plants list (Sukumaran et al. 2008). Future studies should address reasons for its endemism and factors affecting the abundant growth of this plant's populations. That may help us to conserve this very rare species.

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