

Orchids of Coastal Karnataka, India: Diversity, Trends in Population, Threats and Conservation Strategies

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Abstract : Coastal Karnataka is sandwiched between Arabian Sea and the biodiversity hotspot of Western Ghats. This has provided a rich vegetation, canopy and humidity for the sustainable growth and evolution of many orchid populations. Similar to many other biodiversity hotspot regions of India and the world, this region also faces threat from anthropogenic activities and climate change. Hence, there is a need to study the current orchid diversity and trends in population as well as an effective conservation strategy. Coastal belt of Karnataka state of India extends over 325 kilometers and an area of 18,000 km². The region encompasses two national parks such as the Anshi National Park and the Kudremukh National Park. The study regions also include two Wild Life Sanctuaries such as the Someshwara Wildlife Sanctuary and Mookambika Wildlife Sanctuary. The estimated number of orchids in the region includes 30 genera and 45 species. Both terrestrial and epiphytic orchids are found in this region. The region contains many red listed orchids such as *Trias stocksii* (Critically endangered), *Eriad alzellii* (Lower risk vulnerable) and *Dendrobium ovatum* (Vulnerable). The important terrestrial orchids of the region are *Geodorum*, *Habenaria*, *Liparis*, *Malaxis*, *Nervilia*, *Pachystoma*, *Pectelis*, *Peristylus*, *Tropidia* and *Zeuxine*. The epiphytic forms include *Acampe*, *Aerides*, *Bulbophyllum*, *Cleisostoma*, *Conchidium*, *Cottonia*, *Cymbidium*, *Dendrobium*, *Eria*, *Flickingeria*, *Gastrochilus*, *Kingidium*, *Luisia*, *Oberonia*, *Phalaenopsis*, *Pholidota*, *Porpax*, *Rhynchostylis*, *Sirhookera* and *Trias*. The current paper discusses the population strength and changes in the population structure of these orchids along with proposed conservation strategies.

Keywords : orchid diversity, bulbophyllum, dendrobium, orchid conservation

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