



The first anniversary of *Phytotaxa* in the International Year of Biodiversity

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Introduction

Mankind relies on the diversity of life to provide us with food, fuel, water, oxygen, medicine and other essentials, yet this biodiversity is being lost at a greatly accelerated rate because of careless human activity. This weakens the ability of living systems to resist growing threats such as climate change, creating greater poverty through degradation of many ecosystems, both terrestrial and marine.

The United Nations declared 2010 as the International Year of Biodiversity, with the aim of increasing global awareness of the intricate link between people and biodiversity—an emotional and intellectual connection that the growing urban population may have lost in spite of being entirely dependent on it. This is even the case for plant taxonomists. Our studies typically involve discoveries of species new to science, evolutionary relationships not earlier comprehended or previously unappreciated interactions of plants with other living organisms. Despite the loss of the connection between biodiversity and urban populations, it is heartening to note that some new species do achieve high levels of public attention and press coverage. Each year, for example, the International Institute for Species Exploration announces the Top 10 New Species (of animals, plants and other organisms) for the preceding year (<http://species.asu.edu/Top10>), providing examples of exciting new discoveries. Two plants were included on the 2009 list: a new pitcher plant from the Philippines, *Nepenthes attenboroughii* A.S.Rob., S.McPherson & V.Heinrich in Robinson *et al.* (2009: 196), and a previously undescribed yam which is harvested locally in Madagascar, *Dioscorea orangeana* Wilkin in Wilkin *et al.* (2009: 462). In the previous year, the new plant species chosen were the “suicide palm”, *Tahina spectabilis* J.Dransf. & Rakotoarinivo in Dransfield *et al.* (2008: 84) and a caffeine-free coffee from Cameroon, *Coffea charrieriana* Stoff. & F.Anthony in Stoffelen *et al.* (2008: 68).