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Beyond Classical Approaches

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NOTES OF THE SECTIONS OF BEGONIA FROM NORTH WEST OF SARAWAK

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ABSTRACT

The study of Begoniaceae in Sarawak is still inadequate as only few data on it were available. This massive genus grasps our attention for conservation as it was normally labeled as flagship species due to its high endemism. The begonias are easily recognized by its characteristics of having asymmetrical leaves, winged ovary and beautiful flowers. The northern west part of Sarawak, include Kuching and Samarahan Division have long been explored either by the local or foreign botanists since 1880s. Many of the earlier type specimens from Sarawak were based on the collections of mostly from the northern west part. To date, 59 species were recorded from Sarawak which is grouped into 5 sections while others were still doubtful. The section *Petermannia* was very well represented followed by section *Diploclinium* and *Reichenheimia*. Our preliminary study illustrates a similar scenario for the northern west of Sarawak with section *Petermannia* being the most diverse with ten species recorded, followed by the section *Reichencheimia* and *Diploclinium* with both represented by three and two species respectively. No species from section *Sphenanthera* and *Ignota* were recorded while another two species were segregated from section *Petermannia* and placed under uncertain status.

Keywords: *Begonia*, Begoniaceae, *Petermannia*, *Diploclinium*, *Reichencheimia*, northern west of Sarawak, Borneo

INTRODUCTION

Begoniaceae is one of the largest group in the flowering plant families and unique in having all but a score or so of its numerous species belonging to one massive genus, *Begonia* (Sands, 2001). Hoover *et al.* (2004) has ranked the genus *Begonia* as the 16th largest genus in vascular plants by having as many as 900 species. Somehow, Doorenbos *et al.* (1998), estimated the genus to include 1400 species and later, Sands (2001) considered the genus *Begonia* to be the 5th largest genera of vascular plants with up to 1600 species. The taxonomy of the genus *Begonia* has been very complex with its historically controversial.

The *Begonia* species can be easily distinguished by its characteristics of having asymmetrical leaves, separate male and female flowers with usually concolorous tepals and an inferior, usually winged ovary.

BEGONIACEAE IN NORTHERN WEST OF SARAWAK

The study of the family Begoniaceae in Sarawak is still far from enough as there were still lots to be learnt about this gorgeous plant group. The botanical collection of *Begonia* in northern west of Sarawak has started as early as 1886 and yet data on its distribution and ecology as well as taxonomic information were still insufficient. Recently, comprehensive study on this genus has caught our attention as the diversity of *Begonia* in Borneo, particularly in Sarawak, is indeed rich and may lead to a discovery of further new species which yet to be found.

Botanical Collection

The earliest *Begonia* collection from northern west of Sarawak was made by O. Beccari in the year of 1886–1888, which means many of the type specimens were