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Journal of Threatened Taxa

40 **zoo**reach
Zoo Outreach Organisation
Years

10.11609/jott.2025.17.4.26763-26938

www.threatenedtaxa.org

26 April 2025 (Online & Print)

17(4): 26763-26938

ISSN 0974-7907 (Online)

ISSN 0974-7893 (Print)



Open Access





ISSN 0974-7907 (Online); ISSN 0974-7893 (Print)

Publisher
Wildlife Information Liaison Development Society
www.wild.zooreach.org

Host
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www.zooreach.org

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Cover: Nilgiri Large Burrowing Spider *Haploclostus nilgirinus*. Acrylic on canvas. © Aakanksha Komanduri.



Isodon neorensis Ranjan, G. Krishna & Anant Kumar (Lamiaceae): a new record for Sikkim Himalaya, India

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The genus *Isodon* (Schrad. ex Benth.) Spach (Lamiaceae: Nepetoideae: Ocimeae: Isodoninae) in India is represented by about 22 taxa distributed mostly in eastern and peninsular India (Anonymous 2020; Ranjan et al. 2022). During an exploration of Gangtok flora, an interesting species of the genus *Isodon* was collected from Daragaon region of Tadong, Gangtok, Sikkim. The striking characteristics of the species like red colored flowers on lax inflorescence were readily attractive. On further morphological examination, consultation of relevant literature (Ranjan et al. 2022; Wangchuk 2024) and herbarium consultation (CAL) revealed its identity as *Isodon neorensis* Ranjan, G. Krishna & Anant Kumar (2022). *Isodon neorensis* was recently described from Neora Valley National Park, Darjeeling, West Bengal based on the morphological characters. The species was not yet recorded from the state (Anant Kumar 2024 pers. comm.). The detailed description with notes on some variations, color plate is provided here for easy identification.

Taxonomic description

Isodon neorensis Ranjan, G. Krishna & Anant Kumar, Taiwania 67(2): 261. 2022; Wangchuck, S., Pleione 17(2): 218 – 221. 2023. (Image 1).

An erect herb, up to 1 m tall. Stems brown, quadrangular, unbranched, scabrous, internodes 3–8 cm long. Leaves opposite; petiole dark purplish, subterete, 3–6 cm long, scabrous; lamina ovate to cordate, 2–8 cm × 2–5 cm, base cuneate, truncate or cordate, margins bluntly dentate, apex acuminate, sparsely hairy above with scabrous veins, minute brownish-dotted beneath; veins impressed above, raised below. Inflorescence terminal or rarely axillary raceme composed of lax cymes, 10–25 cm, axis scabrid, cymes with peduncle 1–3 cm long, proximally scabrid, distally glabrescent; bracts broadly elliptic, ca. 1.5 cm across, scabrid; bracteoles linear, ca. 1 mm long, scabrid; pedicels 0.8–2 cm long, scabrid. Calyx campanulate, ca. 1 mm long and sparsely glandular, anterior lip 2-lobed, ovate-oblong; posterior lip 3-lobed, each lobe triangular, apex acute; tube 8–10-nerved. Corolla maroon or deep red with white blotch on throat, mixed with red dots, ca. 3.5 mm long, glabrous; tube campanulate, ca. 2 mm long; posterior lip reflexed, 4-lobed, apically rounded, throat hairy; anterior lip ovate or obovate, 1.5–1.7 mm long, slightly concave, scattered glands outside. Stamens 4, dark red, exerted, inserted at the middle of the corolla tube; filaments slender, ca. 3 mm long; anthers flattened, elliptic, ca. 0.5 mm across, yellowish-white and black at maturity. Style

Editor: Afroz Alam, Banasthali Vidyapith, Rajasthan, India.

Date of publication: 26 April 2025 (online & print)

Citation: Rai, P. (2025). *Isodon neorensis* Ranjan, G. Krishna & Anant Kumar (Lamiaceae): a new record for Sikkim Himalaya, India. *Journal of Threatened Taxa* 17(4): 26936–26938. <https://doi.org/10.11609/jott.9556.17.4.26936-26938>

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Funding: None.

Competing interests: The author declares no competing interests.

Acknowledgements: The author is grateful to Dr. Anant Kumar, Department of Botany and Microbiology, Hemvati Nandan Bahuguna Garhwal University, Uttarakhand, India, for his invaluable input during the preparation of the manuscript. The author would also like to thank the Department of Forest and Environment, Deorali, Gangtok, for granting permission to conduct field explorations.

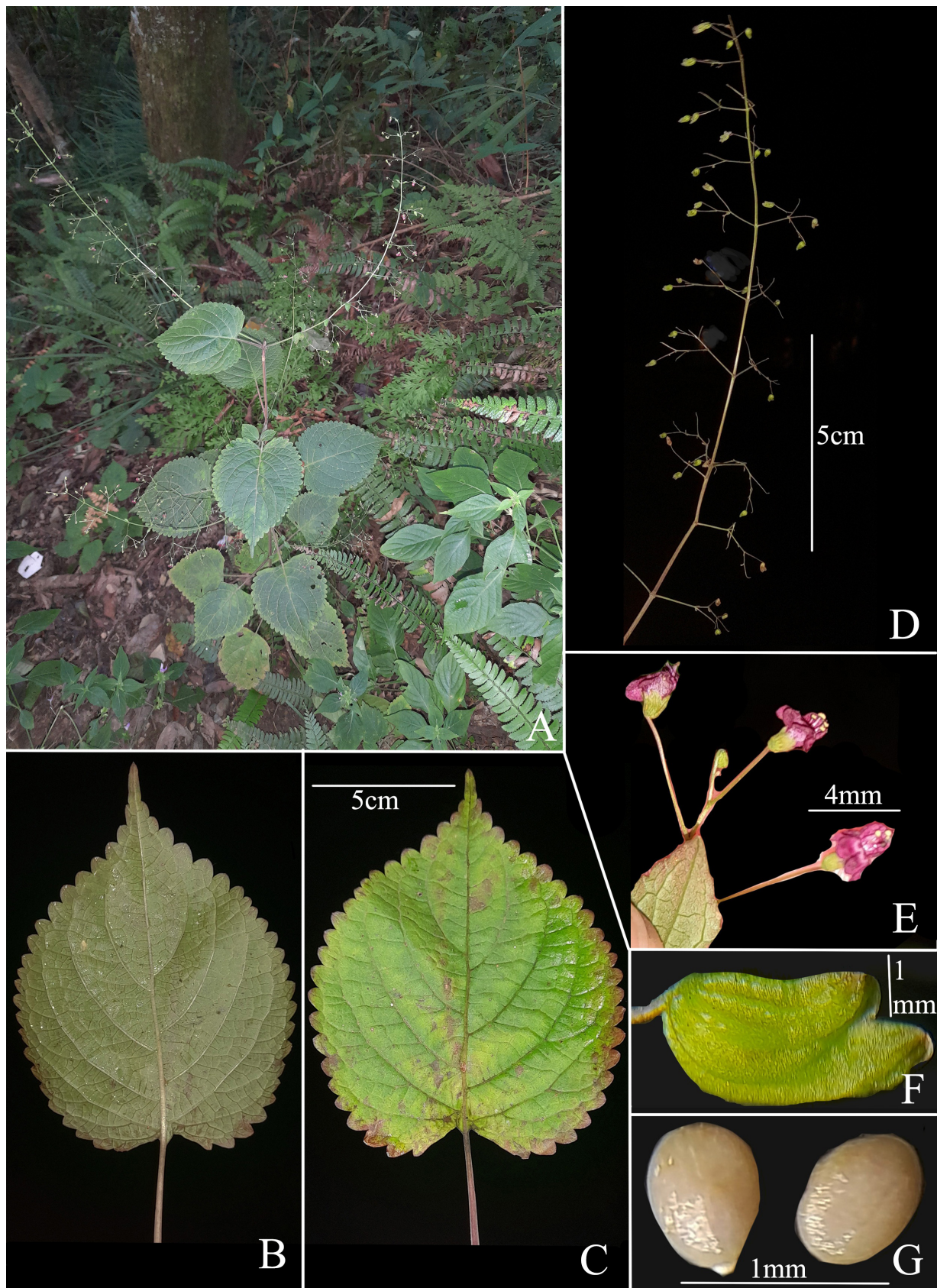


Image 1. *Isodon neorensis* Ranjan, G. Krishna & Anant Kumar: A—Habit | B—Leaf (dorsal side) | C—Leaf (ventral side) | D—Inflorescence | E—Flower close up | F—Calyx remnants covering nutlets | G—Nutlets. © Pramod Rai.

red, slender, gynobasic, ca. 5 mm long.

Flowering and fruiting: October–November.

Habitat: Growing on sub-tropical forest floor. Dominant associated trees were *Schima wallichii*, *Engelhardtia spicata*, *Mallotus denticulata*, *Pinus roxburghii*, *Alnus nepalensis* and *Leucoscepttrum canum*. The population was growing in a disturbed habitat, on a highway roadside. Associated understory species were *Hypoestes phyllostachya*, *Asystasia macrocarpa*, *Dicliptera chinensis*, *Pilea scripta*, and *Ophiopogon intermedius*. A single population was found in the study area with 16 individuals distributed randomly.

Distribution: India (West Bengal, Sikkim), Bhutan (Ranjan et al. 2022; Wangchuk 2024).

Specimen examined: India, Sikkim, Gangtok, Daragaon, 27.3060 °N, 88.5926 °E, 1,190 m, 29 October 2024, Pramod Rai P0507 (BSHC).

Notes: *I. neorensis* shares closeness with *I. lopanthoides* in the region. However, they can be distinguished as follows;

1. Stem scabrous, inflorescence racemic, flowers maroon or deep red, nutlet yellowish *I. neorensis*

1. Stem glabrous to pubescent, inflorescence paniculate, flowers white, nutlet brown *I. lopanthoides*

We also noted a few variations exhibited by our specimens (leaf bases are mostly cordate, the feature not known hitherto, and thus cordate leaves, a new shape variation of the species; flowering till October is also the most extended period noted so far).

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ISSN 0974-7907 (Online) | ISSN 0974-7893 (Print)

April 2025 | Vol. 17 | No. 4 | Pages: 26763–26938

Date of Publication: 26 April 2025 (Online & Print)

DOI: 10.11609/jott.2025.17.4.26763-26938

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