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Two new species of *Henckelia* (Gesneriaceae) from Arunachal Himalayas

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ABSTRACT: In-course of taxonomic studies on the family Gesneriaceae, two new gesneriad species belonging to the genus *Henckelia*, are described here from Eastern Himalayan state Arunachal Pradesh. Detailed descriptions, coloured photo-plates, and illustrations are provided herewith for their easy identification along with taxonomic notes on their morphology, similarities with allied species, and distinguishing characters from the same.

KEY WORDS: Arunachal Pradesh, *Henckelia clarkei*, *Henckelia zingnui*, India, Indian Himalayan Region (IHR).

INTRODUCTION

Arunachal Pradesh, one of the seven sister states in Northeast India is a major part of the Indian Himalayan Region (IHR). It is situated in the confluence zone of two biodiversity hotspots, *viz*. Himalayas and Indo-Burma. This state is bestowed with immense floristic diversity, and emerged as one of the diversification centres for the Gesneriaceae species, especially for the genus *Henckelia* Spreng., which includes about 81 species (Khanal *et al*., 2025; GRC, 2026) worldwide, mainly distributed in the Himalayas to South and Southeast Asia (Weber *et al*., 2011; Middleton *et al*., 2013; POWO, 2026). It is represented in India by 47 species, chiefly diversified in the Himalayas along with Northeast India, and in the Western Ghats (Janeesha and Nampy, 2020; Khanal *et al*., 2025; Maity *et al*., 2025; GRC, 2026). The Indian members are segregated majorly in to two distinct groups: "core *Henckelia*" in the Western Ghats (Weber *et al*., 2020); and the members of erstwhile *Chirita* sect. *Chirita* in the Himalayas and Northeast India (Weber and Burtt, 1998 ["1997"]; Weber *et al*., 2011; Weber *et al*., 2020). The earlier *Chirita* sect. *Chirita* is known to exhibit caulescent habit and orthocarpic capsules (Janeesha and Nampy, 2020, Weber *et al*., 2020); however, Kanthraj *et al*. (2023) showed plagiocarpic capsules amongst the caulescent species from Northeast India, belonging to this group. This raises concerns on the present circumscriptions of the infrageneric groups under this genus. However, there are no doubt on the exclusiveness of the "core *Henckelia*" from the rest of the Indian species which can be differentiated based on the absence of stem or stem-like structures from the rest. Arunachal Pradesh is bestowed with 26 species till date (Bhattacharyya *et al*., 2023; Sahani *et al*., 2024; Borah *et al*., 2025; Khanal *et al*., 2025; Kishwan *et al*., 2025) which belong to the erstwhile *Chirita* sect. *Chirita*.

In course of taxonomic studies on the family Gesneriaceae, several specimens belonging to this genus were collected from Arunachal Pradesh which exhibit caulescent habit; non-crested, cymose inflorescence, flowers with 2 fertile stamens, 3 staminodes, and chiritoid stigma. Therefore, these were placed along with the usual Northeast Indian *Henckelia* members, under the earlier known *Chirita* sect. *Chirita* group. Amongst those, two collections exhibit unique morphological characters from the known Indian members of the genus. One was characterized with urceolate calyx, which was till date known from *Henckelia peduncularis* (Burtt, 1965; Wood, 1974; Maity *et al*., 2024), and recently described *H. indica* (Khanal *et al*., 2025). The other one seemed to be a typical member of the "urticifolia group" found in the Himalayas. A thorough survey of the literature (Clarke, 1974; Burtt *et al*., 1989; Wang *et al*., 1998; Ranasinghe *et al*., 2016; Krishna and Lakshminarasimhan, 2018; Borah *et al*., 2019, 2025; Naithani *et al*., 2019; Kanthraj *et al*., 2020, 2023; Taram *et al*., 2020, 2021, 2022, 2024; Nampy *et al*., 2021; Shi and Yang, 2021; Bhattachryya *et al*., 2023, Maity *et al*., 2024, 2025; Sahani *et al*., 2024; Taram and Borah, 2024, Khanal *et al*., 2025, Kishwan *et al*., 2025) and herbarium specimens housed at ARUN, ASSAM, BM, BSD, BSHC, CAL, DD, E, K, and P (acronyms follow Thiers, 2026–continuously updated), revealed these collections belonging to two new species hitherto unknown to science. In the present article, these two new species of *Henckelia* are described along with colour photographs, detailed descriptions, illustrations and comparative morphological analyses with allied species.

TAXONOMIC TREATMENT

Henckelia clarkei Chowlu, R.Maity, A.Shenoy & S.S.Dash, ***sp. nov.*** **Figs. 1–3**

***Type*:** India. Arunachal Pradesh: Upper Subansiri district, on the way to Daporijo from Raga, 27°51'02.3"N 94°11'52.2"E, 1071 m, 05 Aug 2025, *KC & AS 57247* (holotype: CAL, iso-: ARUN).

***Diagnosis*:** *Henckelia clarkei* is morphologically closely allied to *Henckelia indica* M.Khanal, Taram & D.Borah. However, it can be easily distinguished by its erect habit (vs prostrate to sub-erect habit); well developed, pair of anisophyllous, opposite leaves at every node (vs one well developed leaf and one diminutive stipule-like structure arranged alternatively at every node); free broad ovate bracts (vs fused cupulate bracts); calyx lobes lanceolate, apex acute (vs calyx lobes broad-triangular to ovate, apex acuminate); corolla 4.5–6 cm long, upper lower lip lobes suborbicular, 0.5–0.7 × 0.5–0.8 cm (vs corolla 4.2–4.5 cm long, lower lip lobes ovate, 0.3–0.4 × 0.3–0.35 cm); stigma slightly emarginated at apex, cream-white to brownish-yellow (vs stigma deeply 2-cleft at apex, pinkish).

***Description*:** Perennial herbs, caulescent, erect, sometimes with decumbent base, 30–120 cm tall. **Stem** branched, terete, smooth, green, mostly glabrescent, slightly puberulent towards apex. **Leaves** opposite decussate, highly unequal in a pair; petiole terete, up to 5 cm long, furrowed or channelled adaxially, green to brownish-green, glabrescent; lamina broadly ovate, 5–25 × 5–15 cm, base rounded to cuneate, oblique, margins dentate, apex caudate, adaxially dark green, slightly bullate, abaxially light green, smooth, glabrous on both surface; venation pinnately reticulate; lateral veins 5–7 on each side of midrib, anastomosing. **Inflorescences** axillary, 3–5-flowered cymes; peduncles 3–5 cm long, light green, glabrescent; pedicels 1.5–3.5 cm long, apically swollen, never enclosed within the bracts, light green, glabrescent; bracts 2, free, opposite, green, broadly ovate, 1–1.5 × 0.6–1 cm, margins shallowly serrate, apex cuspidate, pubescent on both surfaces, veins prominent. **Calyx** urceolate, 1.2–1.5 cm long, pale green, sometimes with brownish tinge at base, to entirely greenish white, glabrous on both surfaces,, 5-lobed; tube fused about $^{2}/_{3}$ of calyx length, 0.8–1 cm long; lobes lanceolate-ovate, 0.4–0.5 cm long, margins entire, apex acute. **Corolla** 2-lipped, 4.5–6 cm long; tube infundibuliform, ventricose, widened at or below middle, 4–5.3 cm long, white with yellow-orange tinge, with two darker yellow stripes from centre of tube to base of middle lobe of lower lip, glabrous outside, minute gland-tipped hairy inside; lips divergent; upper lip 2-lobed; lobes equal, orbicular, deflexed, 0.3–0.5 × 0.4–0.5 cm, margins entire, apex rounded; lower lip 3-lobed; lobes subequal, middle lobe slightly larger than lateral two, suborbicular, 0.5–0.7 × 0.5–0.8 cm, margins entire, apex rounded. **Stamens** 2, inserted 1.8–2.2 cm above the corolla base; filaments 1.2–1.5 cm long, white, glabrous, geniculate; anthers 0.15–0.3 × 0.08–0.15 cm, cohering face to face, green to dark brown, glabrous; staminodes 3, two laterals and one median, inserted 1.6–2 cm above corolla base; median one diminutive; lateral ones well developed, filaments 0.8–1 cm long, curved, broadened at base, white, villous; antherodes c. 0.1 cm across, green, glabrous. **Gynoecium** 3.1–3.8 cm long; disc annular, very thin, 0.05–0.15 cm high, pale greenish white; ovary 1.8–2 cm long, pale green, glabrescent–glabrous; style 1.2–1.5 cm long, white, glabrescent–glabrous; stigma chiritoid, lower lip obtrapezoid, 0.15–0.25 cm long, apex slightly emarginate, cream-white to brownish-yellow. **Capsules** linear, 4–6 cm long, green, glabrous.

***Flowering and fruiting*:** July to August

***Habitat*:** This species was located on open hill slopes of tropical montane forests along with different species of *Chlorathus* sp. (Chloranthaceae), *Dipteris* sp. (Dipteridaceae), *Dryopteris* sp. (Dryopteridaceae), *Henckelia hookeri* (Gesneriaceae), *Hydrocotyle* sp. (Araliaceae), *Pilea* sp. (Urticaceae), *Phrynium* sp. (Marantaceae), *etc*.

***Etymology*:** The species epithet "*clarkei*" honours the great botanist Charles Baron Clarke for his immense contributions to the taxonomy of Gesneriaceae.

***Distribution*:** INDIA (Arunachal Pradesh) (Fig. 7)

Fig. 1. Field photographs of ***Henckelia clarkei***. **A**. Habit and habitat, B. Flower close-up.

***Conservation status*:** *Henckelia clarkei* is known only from its type locality at present. During our survey only 15–18 mature plants were observed in the population. Other than this, no detailed data is available for threat

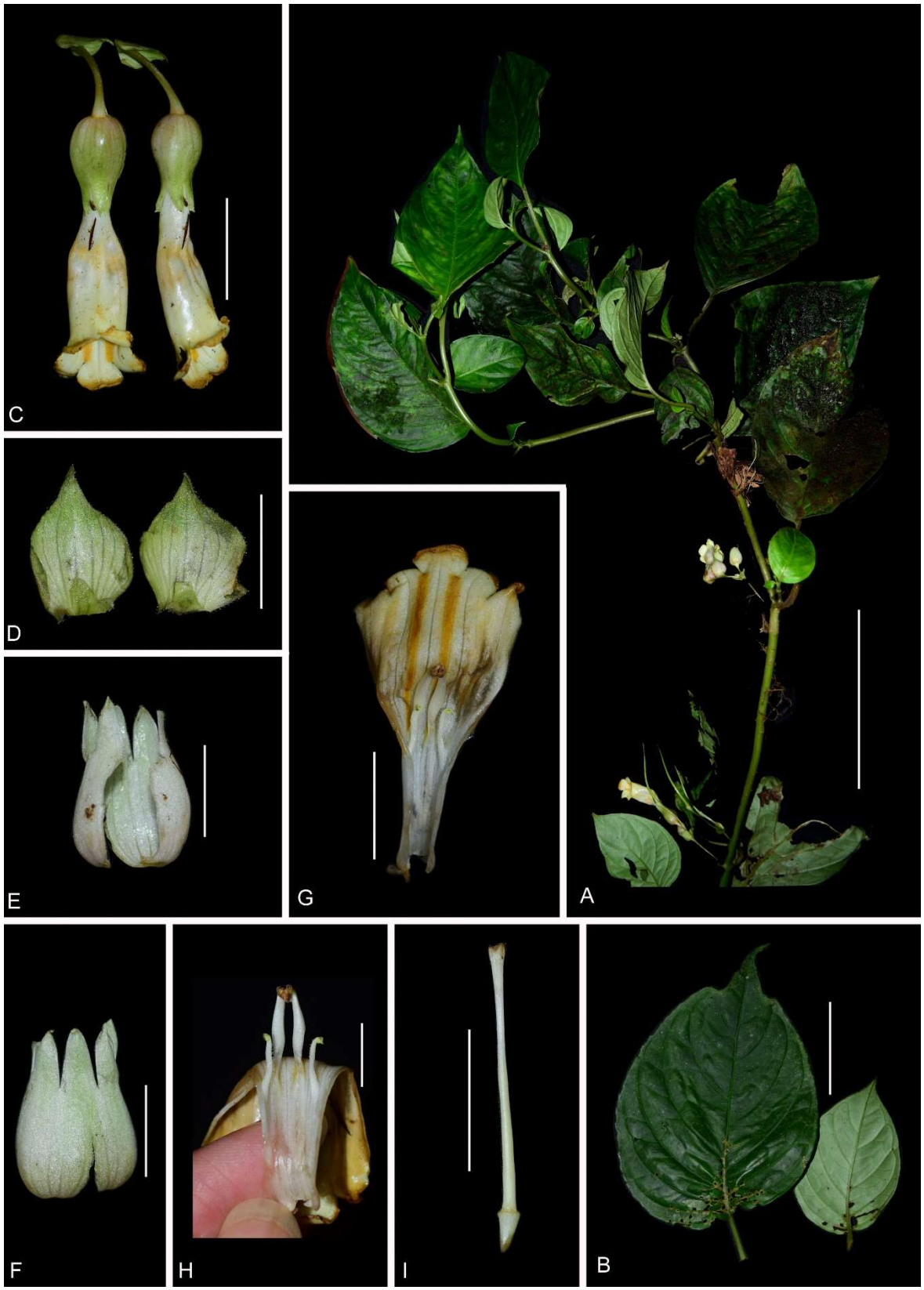

Fig. 2. Photoplate of ***Henckelia clarkei***. **A.** Habit, **B.** Leaves, **C.** Flowers top view, **D.** Bracts, **E.** Calyx split open, **F.** Calyx backside, **G.** Corolla split open, **H.** Corolla opened showing stamens with cohering anthers and staminodes, **I.** Pistil. Scale bar: A = 10 cm, B = 5 cm, C, G, I = 2 cm, D–F, H = 1 cm.

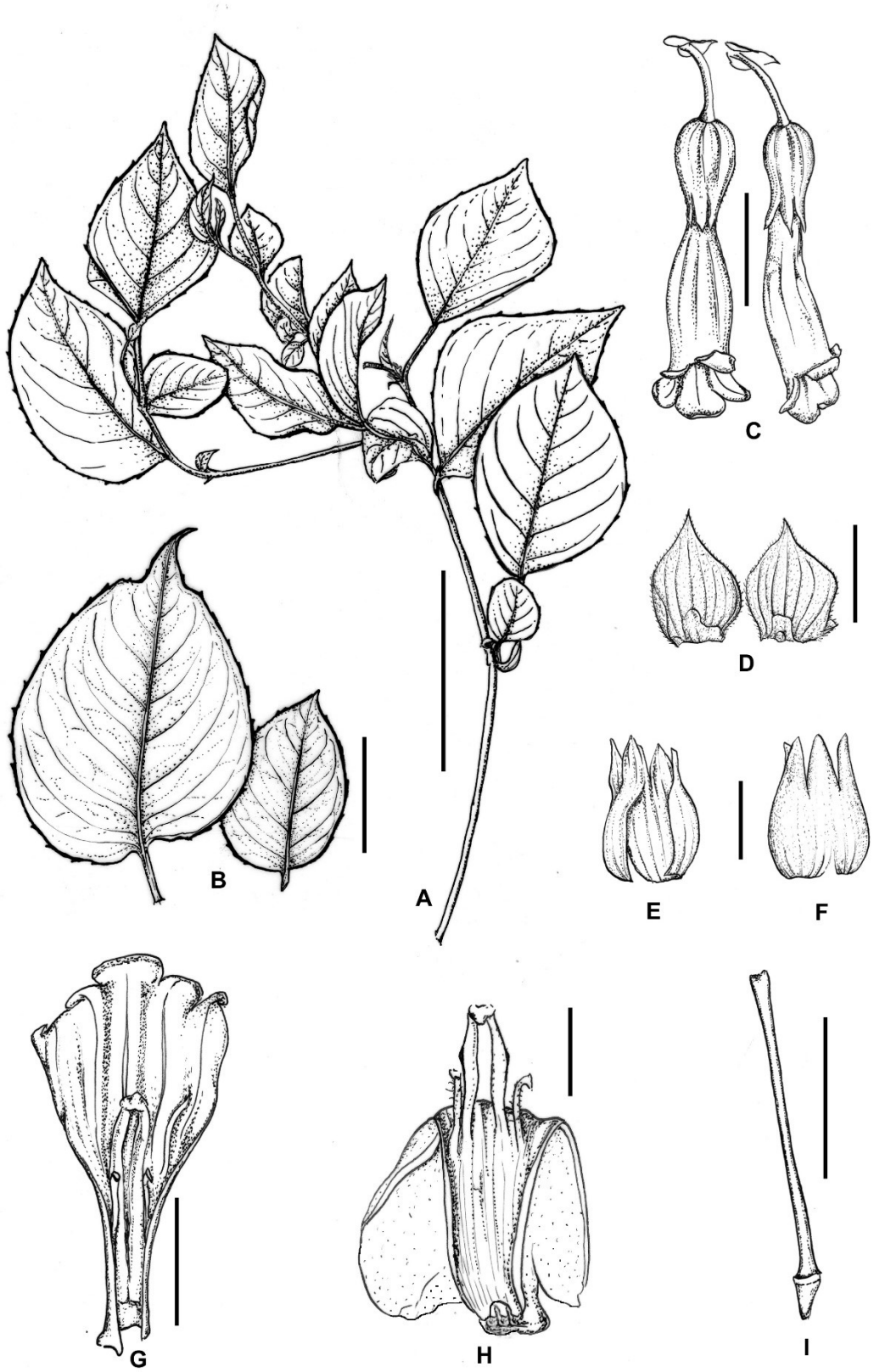

Fig. 3. Illustration of ***Henckelia clarkei.*** **A.** Habit, **B.** Leaves, **C.** Flowers top view, **D.** Bracts, **E.** Calyx split open, **F.** Calyx backside, **G.** Corolla split open, **H.** Corolla opened showing stamens with cohering anthers and staminodes, **I.** Pistil. Scale bar: A = 10 cm, B = 5 cm, C, G, I = 2 cm, D–F, H = 1 cm.

Table 1. Comparison of morphological characters between ***Henckelia clarkei***, ***H. indica***, and ***H. peduncularis***

Characters	*Henckelia clarkei*	*H. indica* (After Khanal *et al.*, 2025)	*H. peduncularis* (After Maity *et al.*, 2024)
Habit	erect, sometimes with decumbent base.	prostrate to sub-erect.	erect, sometimes with decumbent base.
Leaves	2 at each node in opposite-decussate phyllotaxy, both well developed but highly anisophyllous.	2 at each node, one well developed, the other highly reduced to stipule or scale-like structure, giving appearance of alternate phyllotaxy.	2 at each node in opposite-decussate phylotaxy, both well developed, subequal to slightly unequal.
Peduncle	3–5 cm long, glabrescent.	2.5–8 cm long, glabrous.	1–4 cm long, pubescent to pilose.
Bract	free, broadly ovate, 1–1.5 × 0.6–1 cm, pubescent, apex cuspidate, margin shallow serrate.	fused, cupular, broadly ovate–orbicular, 2.5–2.8 × 2.9–3.2 cm, glabrous, apex acute, margin entire to repand.	free, suborbicular–broadly ovate, 0.6–2.5 × 0.6–2.5 cm, pubescent–glabrescent, apex acute, margin serrate.
Calyx	tube fused about $^{2}/_{3}$ of calyx length; lobes lanceolate, apex acute.	tube fused about $^{3}/_{4}$ of calyx length; lobes broad triangular to ovate, apex acuminate.	tube fused about $^{3}/_{4}$ of calyx length; lobes ovate to narrow triangular, apex acute.
Corolla	4.5–6 cm long, white with yellow-orange tinge; tube 4–5.3 cm long, glabrous outside, minute gland- tipped hairy inside; upper-lip and lower-lip lobes suborbicular, and lower-lip lobes much larger in size than upper-lip lobes.	4.2–4.5 cm long, bright yellow; tube 3–4 cm long, glabrous outside, sparsely pubescent inside; upper-lip and lower-lip lobes ovate, subsimilar in size.	4–5 cm long, white with light pinkish tinge; tube 3–4 cm long, glabrous on both sides; upper-lip and lower-lip lobes ovate to sub-orbicular, subsimilar in size.
Stigma	slight emarginated at apex, cream-white to brownish-yellow.	deeply 2-cleft at apex, pinkish.	flabellate, cream-white to cream-yellow.

assessment of this taxon at present. Therefore, it has been placed as Data Deficient (DD) according to the IUCN criteria and categories (IUCN Standards and Petitions Committee, 2024).

Fig. 4. Field photographs of ***Henckelia zingnui*. A.** Habit, **B.** Flower, front view close-up.

Henckelia zingnui Chowlu, R.Maity, A.Shenoy & S.S. Dash, ***sp. nov.*** **Figs. 4–6**

***Type*:** India. Arunachal Pradesh: West Siang district, on way to Aalo from Daporijo, 28°04'25.0"N 94°42'08.0"E, 862 m, 08 Aug 2025, *KC & AS 57267* (holotype: CAL, iso-: ARUN).

***Diagnosis*:** *Henckelia zingnui* is morphologically closely allied to *Henckelia collegii-sancti-thomasii* A.Joe, D.Borah, Taram & Sandhya, however it can be easily distinguished by its much smaller, 3–8 cm long leaves with 5–7 lateral veins (vs much larger, 9–23 cm long leaves with 8–12 lateral veins); petioles and peduncles covered with brown pubescent hairs (vs petioles and peduncles covered with white tomentose to villous hairs); corolla 3.5–4.5 cm long, white with distinct maroon-purple-magenta blotch near throat, with 2 prominent linear, slightly raised yellow markings (vs corolla 4–5.5 cm long, dark purple with yellow-orange within, with several brown-purple streaks without any raised linear ridges); geniculation completely encircling the filaments, wedge shaped towards the tube opening, ring shaped towards the corolla tissue (vs geniculation only on one side of the filament, ring-like towards the tube); filaments short gland-tipped hairy (vs filaments long gland-tipped hairy); disc annular (disc lobed).

***Description*:** Perennial, erect to sub-erect herbs, sometimes decumbent at base, 30–70 cm tall. **Stem** terete, green to brownish or greyish green, densely pubescent with brownish hairs. **Leaves** opposite, usually in distinctly unequal pairs, petiolate; petioles 1–4 cm long, terete, green to brownish green, densely brown pubescent; lamina ovate to elliptic, 3–8 × 2.5–7 cm, base rounded, slightly oblique, margins very shallow serrulate to subentire, apex acute, adaxially dense puberulent, dark green, abaxially dense

Table 2. Comparison of morphological characters between ***Henckelia collegii-sancti-thomasii***, ***H. urticifolia***, and ***H. zingnui***

Characters	*Henckelia collegii-sancti-thomasii* (After Kanthraj *et al*., 2023)	*H. urticifolia* (After Wood, 1974; Naithani *et al*., 2019)	*H. zingnui*
Leaf Lamina	ovate to elliptic, 9–23 × 4–12 cm, margin serrulate to denticulate.	ovate to elliptic, 4–17 × 2.5–10 cm, margin dentate to serrate.	ovate to elliptic, 3–8 × 2.5–7 cm, margins very shallow serrulate to subentire.
Lateral Veins	8–12.	6–9.	5–7.
Corolla	4–5.5 cm long, dark purple with yellow-orange within, with several brown-purple streaks without any raised linear ridges.	5.5–6 cm long, purple to pink, with yellow-orange throat inside, with darker pink to brown striations running from lobes to tube having two distinct yellow stripes (sometimes slightly raised) at the centre of corolla floor near throat to tube.	3.5–4.5 cm long, white with distinct maroon–purplish-magenta blotch near throat, with 2 prominent linear, slightly raised yellow markings.
Fertile stamen filament	long gland-tipped hairy above geniculation.	glabrous.	short gland-tipped hairy above geniculation.
Geniculation	developed only on one side of the fertile stamen filaments, ring-like towards the tube.	developed obliquely encircling the fertile stamen filaments, incomplete 'v-shaped' towards the tube.knob-like towards corolla tissue.	developed completely encircling the fertile stamen filaments, wedge shaped towards the tube, ring shaped towards the corolla tissue.
Disc	lobed.	lobed.	not lobed.

white pubescent on lamina tissue, dense brown pubescent along veins, pale green; venation unicostate, reticulate, lateral veins 5–7 on each side of midrib. **Inflorescence** axillary, 3–5-flowered cyme; peduncle terete, 2–3.5 cm long, green, pubescent to pilose; pedicels twice or more longer than peduncles, glabrous to sparsely puberulent; bracts 2, inserted at junction of pedicel and peduncle, never conceals the pedicels, free, sessile, ovate-elliptic, 0.7–1 × 0.3–0.5 cm, base truncate, margins entire, apex obtuse, green, sparsely villous. **Calyx** campanulate, 1.7–2 cm long, green, densely villous, denser on the outer surface; lobes 5, narrow lanceolate, 1–1.3 cm long, acute. **Corolla** infundibuliform, 3.5–4.5 cm long, 2-lipped, tube 2.7–3.2 cm long, dorsally pouched, gradually tapering towards narrow base, outer surface white with maroon-purple tinge, dense villous, inner surface white, with distinct maroon–purplish-magenta blotch near throat on both roof and floor, with 2 prominent linear, slightly raised, yellow markings in middle of blotch on floor of corolla throat entrance, densely gland-tipped hairy; upper lip 2-lobed, lobes suborbicular, 0.5–1 × 0.8–1 cm, margin entire, apex rounded, white; lower lip 3-lobed, lobes ellipsoid, 1.2–1.5 × 0.5–0.7 cm, white. **Stamens** 2, inserted 1.8–2 cm above base of corolla, filaments 1.0–1.2 cm long, curved, white dense red gland-tipped hairs above geniculation, reddish glabrous below, strongly geniculate near base; geniculation ring like, pink to red coloured; anthers coherent face-to-face, 0.4–0.6 × 0.1–0.2 cm, cream-yellow, glabrous; staminodes 3, inserted 0.9–1 cm below stamens; two lateral ones 0.6–0.8 cm long, white, reddish towards apex, villous, with inward curved green, glabrous antherodes; central staminode diminutive. **Pistil** 3.2–3.8 cm long, disc 0.1–0.2 cm high, ring-like, greenish; ovary cylindrical, 1.2–1.7 cm long, slightly curved, tapering towards apex, green, glabrous; style 1–1.2 cm long, white, densely gland-tipped and eglandularpilose; stigma chiritoid, upper lobe highly reduced, lower lobe deeply bifid, 1.5–2 mm long, green, pubescent on back. **Capsules** linear, 5–9 cm long, glabrous.

***Flowering & Fruiting*:** July to August

***Habitat*:** This species was found in a damp area near a stream in deep shaded areas of a tropical forest along with different species of *Dipteris* sp. (Dipteridaceae), *Dryopteris* sp. (Dryopteridaceae), *Hydrocotyle* sp. (Araliaceae), *Pilea* sp. (Urticaceae), *etc*.

***Etymology*:** The species epithet "*zingnui*" honours Chou Zingnu Namchoom, an eminent youth leader from Namsai district of Arunachal Pradesh, who harbours keen interest in nature and promotes biodiversity conservation to youth of the state.

***Distribution*:** INDIA (Arunachal Pradesh) (Fig. 7)

***Conservation status*:** *Henckelia zingnui* is also known only from its type locality at present, and only about 12 mature plants were observed during its first discovery. Due to unavailability of further necessary data for threat assessment of this taxon at present, it has been placed under Data Deficient (DD) category according to IUCN criteria and categories (IUCN Standards and Petitions Committee, 2024).

DISCUSSION

The geographic position of Arunachal Pradesh, in the confluence zone between the Eastern Himalayas and Indo-Burmese Hills, with highly varied altitudinal ranges due to traversed mountains throughout the state, and high amount of precipitation, makes it a highly suitable habitat for luxuriant plant growth of many Gesneriaceae species. Both the new species exhibit chiritoid stigma and non-crested inflorescence for which theywere placed within the genus *Henckelia*. Furthermore, their caulescent habit makes them allied to the members of *Chirita* sect. *Chirita*, under this genus. Among the two new species described in the present article, *Henckelia clarkei* shares morphological affinities with the *H. peduncularis* (B.L.Burtt)

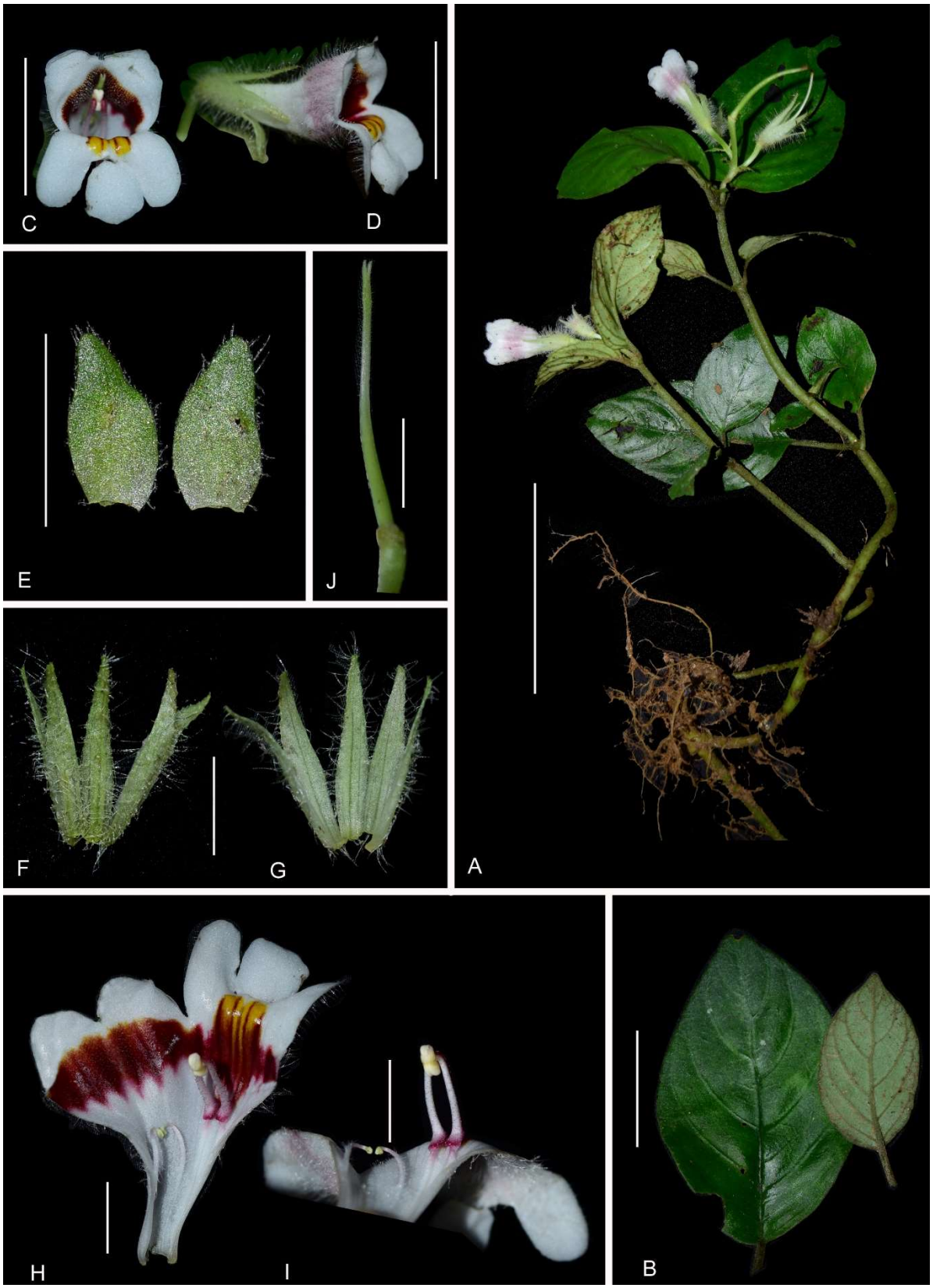

Fig. 5. Photoplate of ***Henckelia zingnui*. A.** Habit, **B.** Leaves, **C.** Flower, front view, **D.** Flower, side view, **E.** Bracts, **F.** Calyx split open (outside view), **G.** Calyx split open (inside view), **H.** Corolla split open, **I.** Corolla open showing stamens with cohering anthers and staminodes. **J.** Pistil. Scale Bar: A = 10 cm, B–D = 3 cm, E–J = 1 cm.

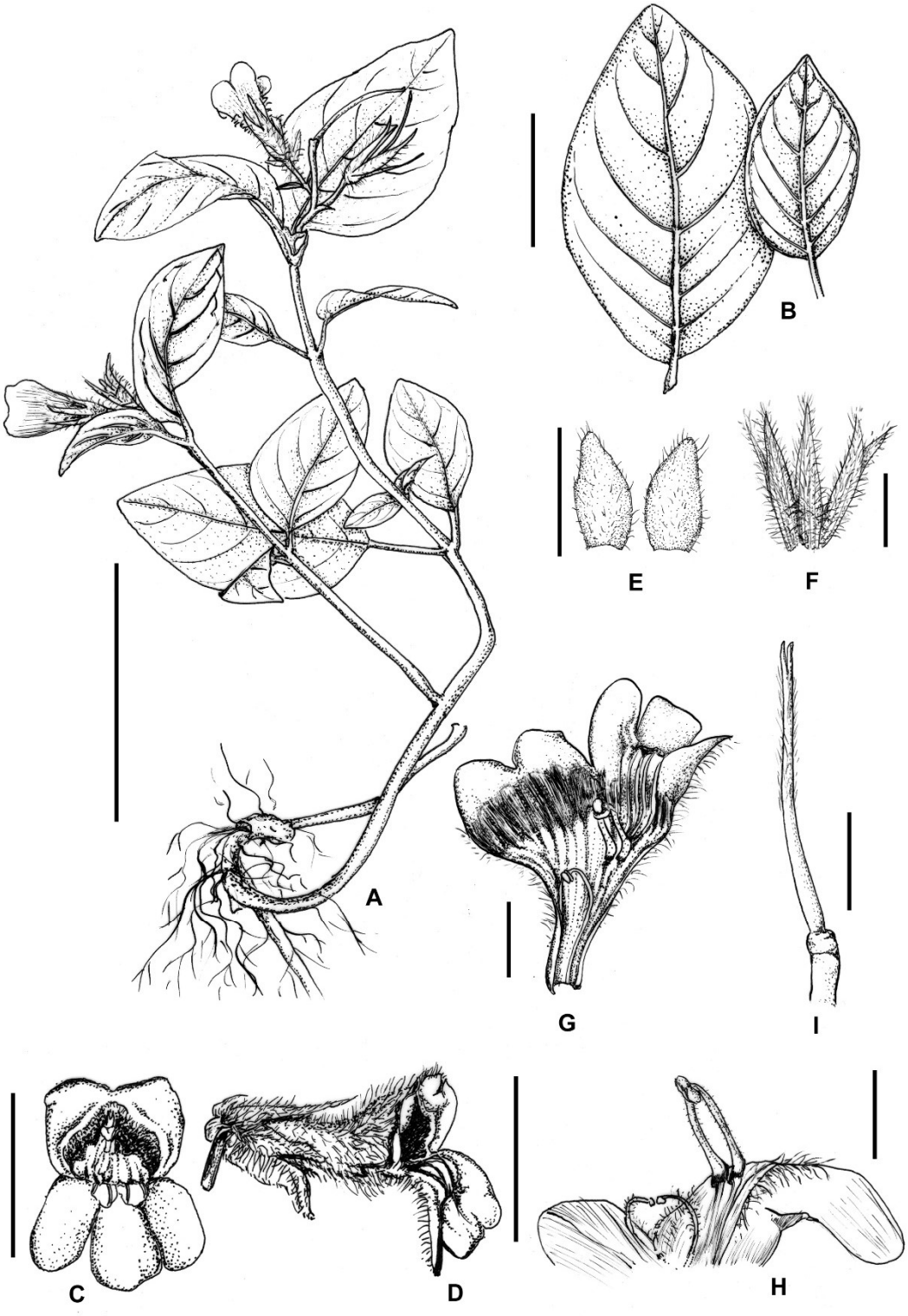

Fig. 6. Illustration of ***Henckelia zingnui.*** **A.** Habit, **B.** Leaves, **C.** Flower, front view, **D.** Flower, side view, **E.** Bracts, **F.** Calyx split open (outside view), **G.** Corolla split open, **H.** Corolla open showing stamens with cohering anthers and staminodes. **I.** Pistil. Scale Bar: A = 10 cm, B–D = 3 cm, E–I = 1 cm.

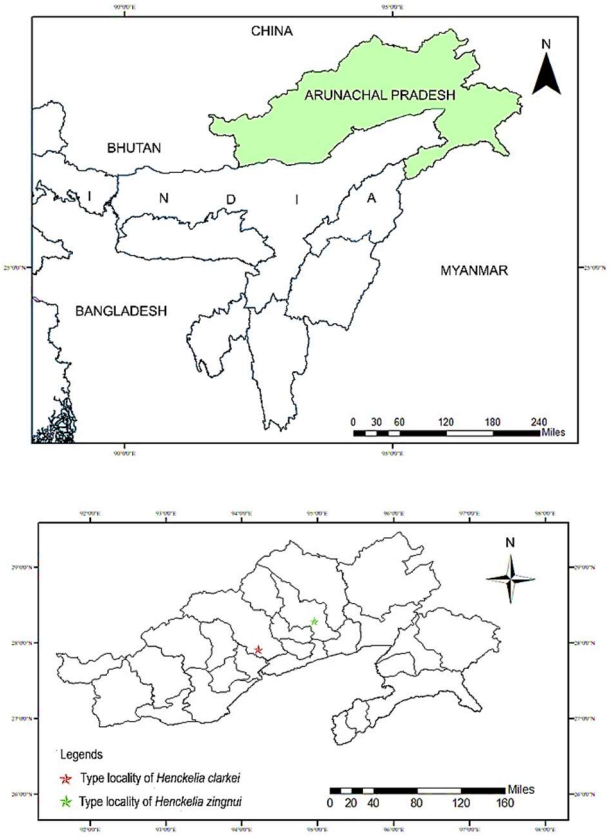

Fig. 7: Distribution map of ***Henckelia clarkei*** and ***H. zingnui***.

D.J.Middleton & Mich.Möller, and recently described *H. indica* M.Khanal, Taram & D.Borah. All three are unique within the genus for their urceolate calyx, slightly genicualate filaments of fertile stamens. However, *H. peduncularis* stands out amongst these three by its short pedicels always concealed within bracts. *H. indica* and *H. clarkei* exhibit much more similarities by having longer pedicels than *H. peduncularis*, which are never concealed by bracts; but eventually both of these are distinguished from each other by their habit, leaves, bracts, calyx lobes, corolla lobes, and stigmatic structure (Table 1).

The other described new species, *H. zingnui* belongs to the *H. urticifolia* group due to presence of campanulate calyx, *Bos*-like hump on the upper side of the corolla tube and highly modified geniculation on the filaments of fertile stamen. This species is specifically, more closely allied in terms of morphology with the *H. collegii-sancti-thomasii* A.Joe, D.Borah, Taram & Sandhya, and *H. urticifolia* (Buch.-Ham. ex D.Don) A.Dietr. Many species in this group have short pedicels concealed or nearly concealed by bracts, *viz. H. adenocalyx*, *H. hookeri*, *H. infundibuliformis*, and *H. umbellata*. Whereas, *H. collegii-sancti-thomasii*, *H. pathakii*, *H. siangensis*, *H. urticifiolia*, and *H. zingnui* differs from them by having pedicels longer than bracts, and never concealed. *H. pathakii* stands out amongst these by its cupulate bracts, while the rest four have free bracts. Among these, *H. siangensis* stands out with its winged calyx. The white corolla in *H. zingnui*, is unusual in this group and therefore makes it unique and different from *H. collegii-sancti-thomasii*, and *H. urticifolia* (also see Table 2). Other known white flowered *Henckelia* species from the region, like *H. anachoreta*, *H. multiflora*, *H. oblongifolia*, mostly form a different group which does not exhibit the above-mentioned combination of characters. This brilliant white corolla with distinct maroon markings in the throat, makes *H. zingnui* readily recognisable within the "*urticifolia* group" as well as within the genus *Henckelia*.

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