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Threatened plants of western Cameroon

Chassalia laikomensis Cheek (*Rubiaceae* - coffee family)

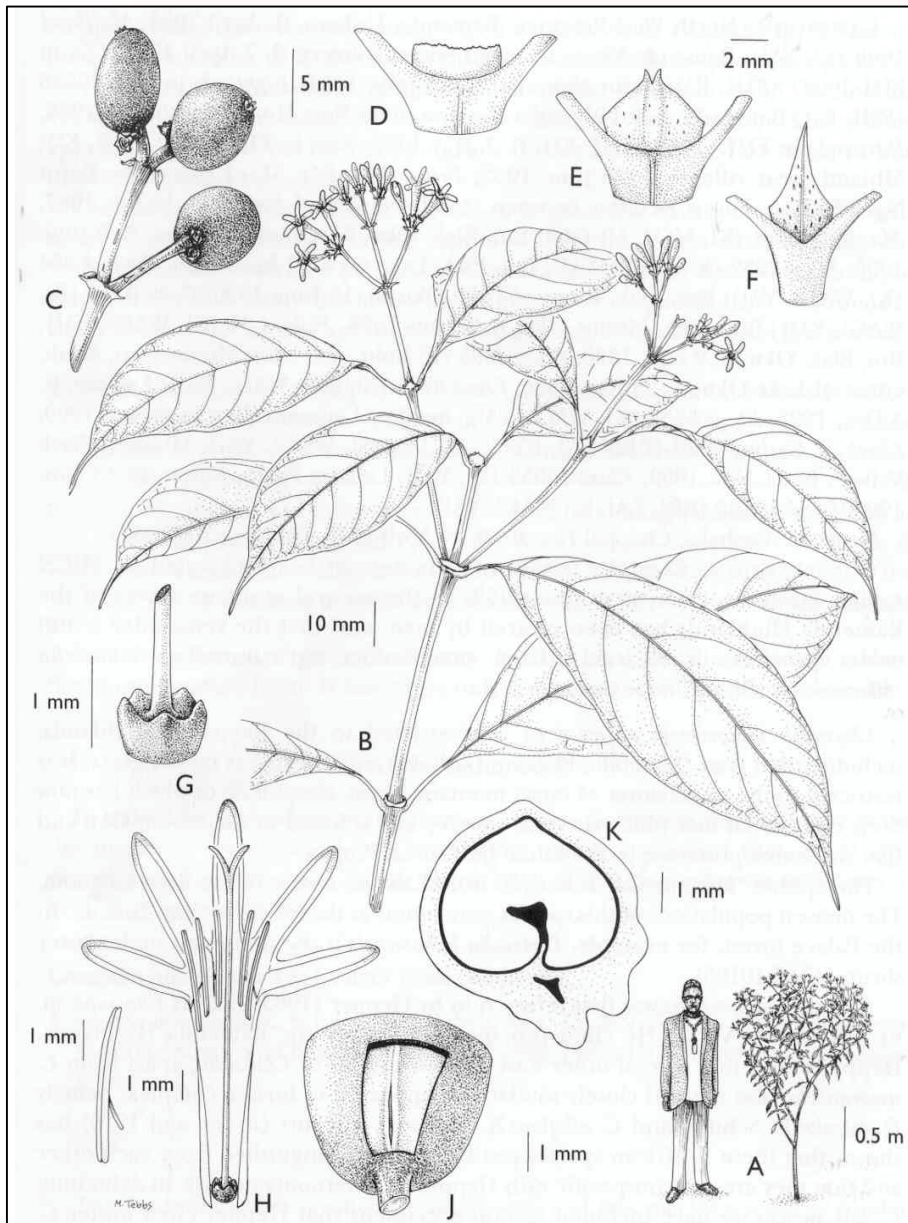
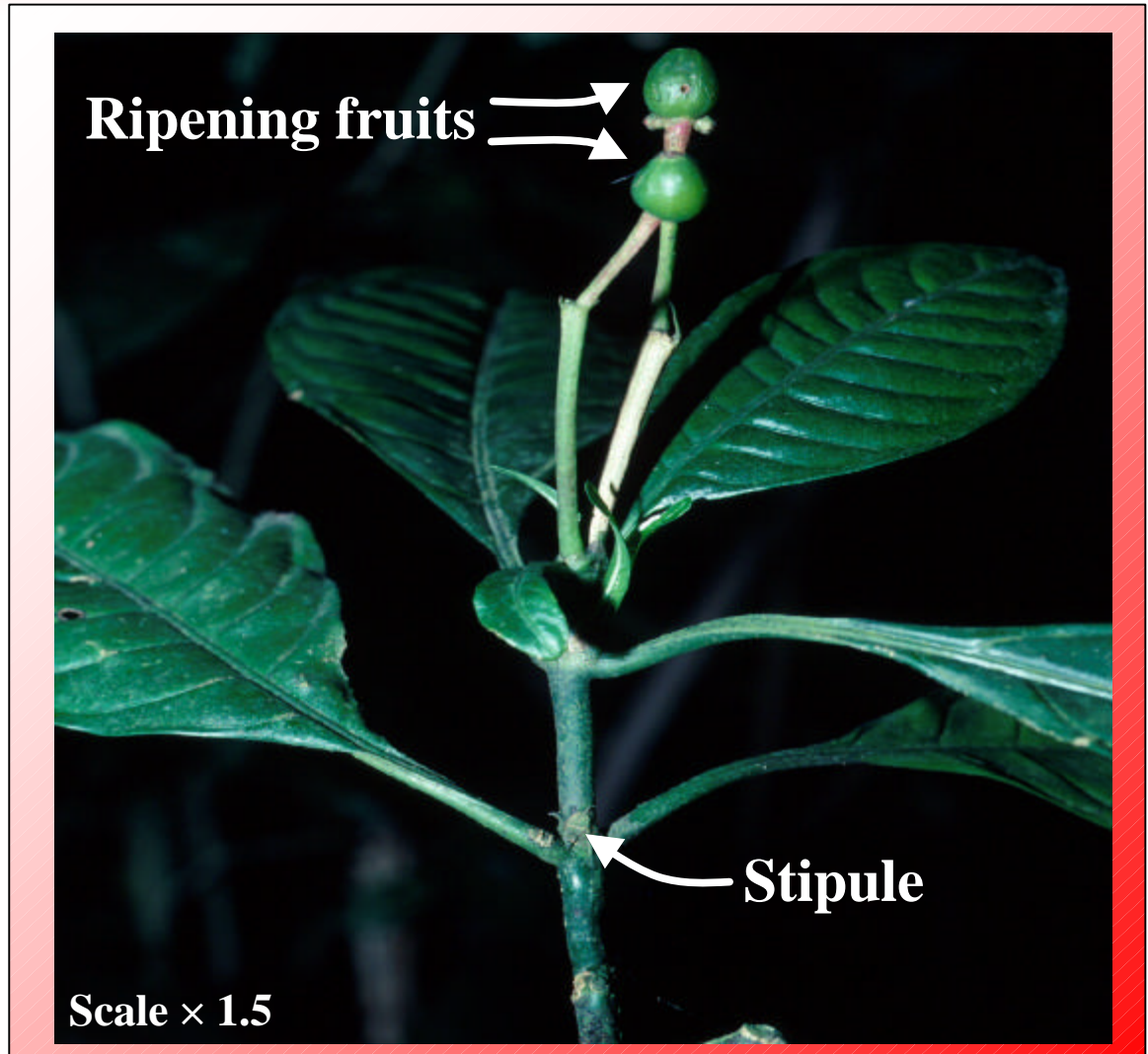


FIG. 1. *Chassalia laikomensis*. A habit sketch; B habit, flowering branch; C portion of infructescence; D marcescent stipule base; E bifid stipule, showing raphides; F stipule with entire apex; G disc surrounding style-base; H opened corolla tube, including style; anther and free filament left; J base of fruit with part of outer flesh removed to show pre-formed germination slit in pyrene; K fruit in transverse section showing aborted locule. A drawn from field sketch of Cheek & Gosline 9970; B, D - H drawn from Etuge 3335; C, J & K drawn from Cheek 8765. Drawn by Margaret Tebbs.



The Laikom Palace forest is an internationally important forest as it harbours the largest known population of *Chassalia laikomensis*.

Chassalia laikomensis was once probably fairly common in the Bamenda highlands, but in the last few decades there has been a dramatic reduction in the forest cover. It is considered that the best hope for the survival of this species is at Mount Oku and the Ijim ridge. It is usually found at altitudes below 2000m, this contour line being on the edge of the Kilum-Ijim protected area boundary.

The greatest number of individuals of this species that have been seen are at Laikom (hence the name given to this species) and in the undisturbed part of the Laikom Palace forest, it is the dominant understorey species. In 1999, botanists from the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew in England with Earthwatch volunteers and ecomonitors from the Kilum-Ijim Mountain Forest Project counted 25-30 plants there.

Chassalia laikomensis has been assigned an IUCN rating of CR A1 - **CRITICALLY ENDANGERED**. More information is needed on the number of existing individuals, and a search for further populations would be very helpful in assisting with conservation management and protection of this rare plant.



Benedict Pollard
20 September 2001

Cheek, M. & Csiba, L. (2000).
A new species and a new combination in *Chassalia* (*Rubiaceae*)
from Western Cameroon. Kew Bull. 55: 883 - 888

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