

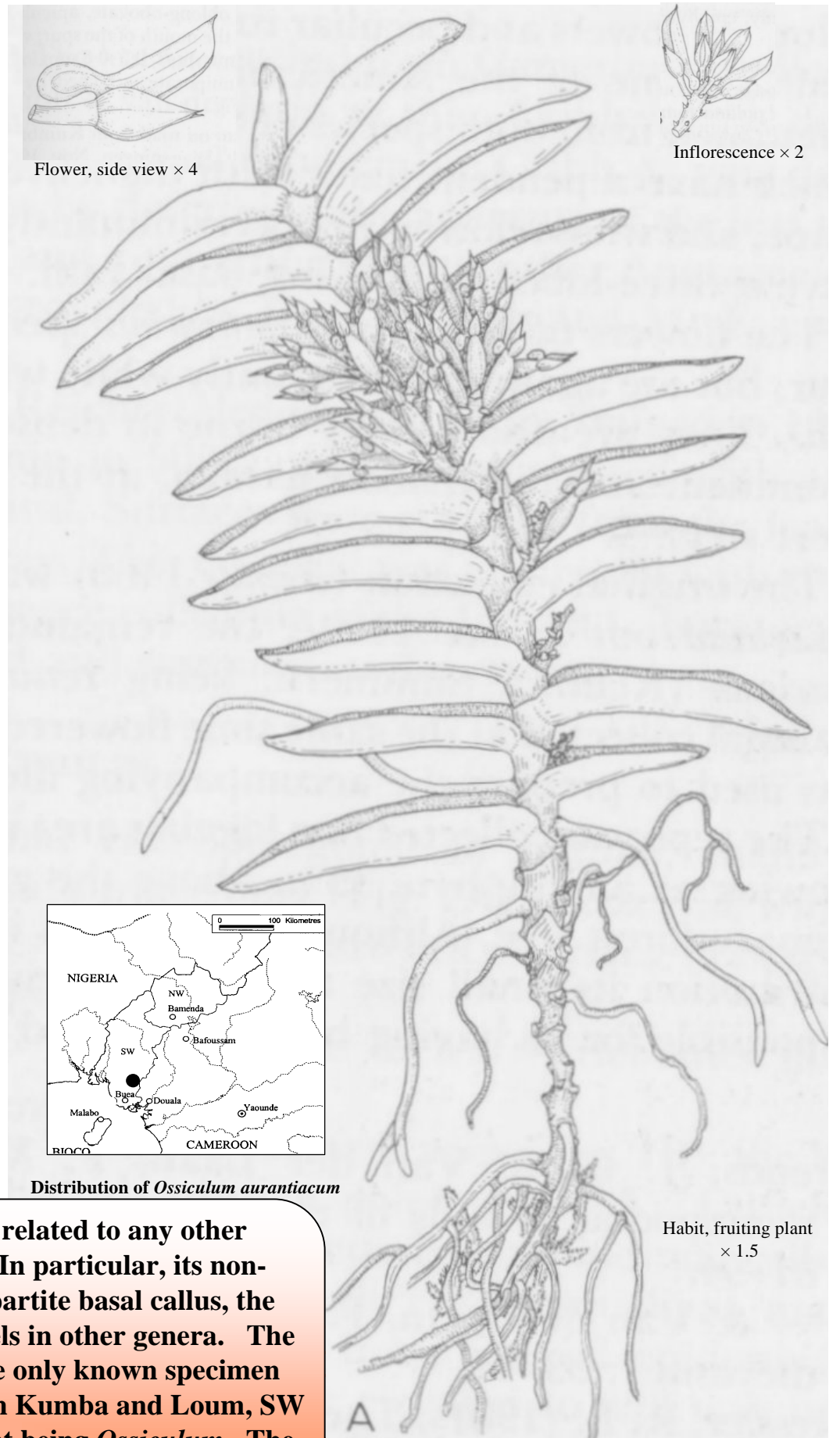
Threatened plants of western Cameroon

Ossiculum aurantiacum P.J.Cribb & van der Laan*

(*Orchidaceae*)



Ossiculum aurantiacum



Distribution of *Ossiculum aurantiacum*

Habit, fruiting plant
× 1.5

Ossiculum is a most distinctive genus not, at first sight, closely related to any other African or Madagascan representatives of the tribe *Vandaeae*. In particular, its non-resupinate flowers of a distinctive orange colour, lip with a bipartite basal callus, the pincer-like rostellum and pollinarium do not find close parallels in other genera. The name was given in honour of Mr H.J.Beentje who collected the only known specimen on Dec. 16th 1980 in the Mungo River Forest Reserve, between Kumba and Loum, SW Province. Beentje is Dutch for small bone, the Latin equivalent being *Ossiculum*. The only species in the genus is *O. aurantiacum*, a reference to its orange flowers.

The type specimen was collected in a logging area as an epiphyte 35 m above the ground on the lower branches of a primary forest tree. Although it is likely to be an endemic with a limited distribution, its small size and the denseness of the forest could have been responsible for its having been overlooked until 1980. Other unusual plants have been found in this area, including a member of the *Acanthaceae* that may prove to also represent a genus new to science. It is clear that with such discoveries the Kumba to Loum region is of high conservation importance. Further searches to provide more information on *Ossiculum* would be most welcome.