

New *Sonerila* species reported from southwest Philippines

August 23 2023, by Li Yuan



Sonerila mapelo. Credit: Mark Arcebal K. Naive

The genus *Sonerila*, belonging to the plant family Melastomataceae, is represented by approximately 194 species. The genus is poorly known in the Philippines and is represented by only two species, *Sonerila tenera*

and *S. woodii*.

During a botanical exploration in October 2022 at the Tabu-tabu Biodiversity Monitoring Site of Pasonanca Natural Park in Philippines, a researcher from Xishuangbanna Tropical botanical Garden (XTBG) of the Chinese Academy of Sciences collected an unknown population of *Sonerila* species. After a careful examination of its morphology and consultation of relevant literature and type specimens of *Sonerila* species from the Philippines and neighboring countries, the researcher confirmed it as a species new to science.

The [new species](#) was named as *Sonerila mapelo* and reported in *Taiwania* on Aug. 23.

Sonerila mapelo is a terrestrial to epiphytic, perennial herb. It has dimorphic leaves, axillary inflorescence and oblong anthers with emarginate apex. It can be easily distinguished from all other Philippine *Sonerila* for short petioles and strongly dimorphic leaves at each node. It closely resembles *S. metallica* but differs significantly for the following characters: both sides of the leaves densely strigose with up to six major veins, broadly cordate small leaves, etc.

Sonerila mapelo is found growing in the broad leaf montane forest as a terrestrial on moss cushions or as an epiphyte on the lower trunk of tree ferns with a moist, cool, and deeply shaded environment at an elevation between 1,100 to 1,360 meters above sea level. It is endemic to Zamboanga Peninsula, the island of Mindanao.

The researchers proposed the conservation status of the new species as vulnerable, since the species is so far only known in Tabu Tabu BMS of Pasonanca Natural Park, La Paz, Zamboanga City.

More information: A new species of *Sonerila* (Melastomataceae)

serendipitously discovered in Pasonanca Natural Park, Zamboanga City, Southwestern Philippines with notes on *S. woodii*. *Taiwania*, DOI: [10.6165/tai.2023.68.318](https://doi.org/10.6165/tai.2023.68.318). taiwania.ntu.edu.tw/abstract/1942/1

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