

New orchid identified from Komodo

5 June 2013



(Phys.org) —A new species of orchid has been identified on the South East Asian island of Komodo despite having been wrongly named for the past 300 years.

According to research by Dr Dave Roberts from the University of Kent, the [orchid](#) – named *Vanda perplexa* – had originally been confused with other similar [species](#) but has only now been officially identified and described as an entirely new species.

Co-authored by Dr Roberts of the Durrell Institute of Conservation and Ecology (DICE), and Martin Motes, a world renowned orchid grower, the findings have been published in a paper in *Kew Bulletin*, titled "*Vanda perplexa* (Orchidaceae): a new species from the Lesser Sunda Islands."

As a popular tourist destination, Komodo is commonly known for being the home of the [Komodo dragon](#). Photographs from tourist trips were used to help researchers identify the origin of the species.

The orchid, which has big round pink flowers, large stems and grows up in the trees, is from a group of orchids that is particularly popular with orchid growers.

Dr Roberts, Senior Lecturer in Biodiversity Conservation, said: 'It is remarkable that this species has gone unnoticed for so long, given that Komodo is a tourist destination. However it is likely that the National Park status has helped protect this species – along with the dragons.'

'The mystery of *Vanda perplexa* began with the work of Georg Eberhard Rumphius, a blind German botanist. Rumphius described a number of species of orchids and it is under one of these species, *Vanda furva*, that our new species has been masquerading.

Over the subsequent 300 years various species have been attributed to Rumphius' *Vanda furva*, including this species, but it is only now that it has been officially described and given its own name.'

Dr Roberts' research interests focus on questions relating to species detectability and extinction, and orchid ecology.

Provided by University of Kent

APA citation: New orchid identified from Komodo (2013, June 5) retrieved 19 October 2019 from <https://phys.org/news/2013-06-orchid-komodo.html>

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