

**HABITATS OF *Anoectochilus setaceus*, *Zeuxine flava*, *Zeuxine regia* IN
KANNELIYA MAN AND BIOSPHERE RESERVE AND PEAK
WILDERNESS SANCTUARY IN SRI LANKA**

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Anoectochilus setaceus, *Zeuxine flava*, and *Zeuxine regia* are three endangered medicinal plants belong to family Orchidaceae and sub family Neottioideae. They are widely used in traditional medicine. Due to its beautiful variegated leaves they are also used as ornamental plants and commonly known as Jewel Orchids.

The Methodology used to identify the natural distribution of these species was field observation in the sites. In order to identify the places where these species are growing knowledge of the traditional practitioners and village people were used. According to literature, these species are confined to tropical wet evergreen, sub montane and mid country wet ever green forests. In this study these three species were observed in particular locations in Kanneliya MAB reserve and Peak Wilderness sanctuary.

Anoectochilus setaceus is a rather common species found under the shade of trees among fallen leaves. It was found along the riverbanks in Kanneliya while in Peak Wilderness it was found in a valley close to a stream. They were confined to small patches with high humidity where it gets very low intensity of sunlight. Number of plants, which were observed in Peak Wilderness sanctuary, was high (150 plants/m²) while it was lesser (50 plants/m²) in Kanneliya. Distance between two forest patches where *A. setaceus* was found was about 50m in Peak Wilderness sanctuary while it was too far (>100m) in Kanneliya MAB reserve. Some patches had a distance of about 2km.

Zeuxine regia was found in disturbed sites in Kanneliya MAB along the trail closer to village, which situated at the boundary of the forest. In Peak Wilderness also this species was found closer to the main trail starts from Siripagama. These plants were found in places where there is no stream even within 500m. *Z. regia* was found among rocks where environmental conditions were very harsh but the soil was rather wet.

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Zeuxine flava was observed along a trail situated within the village in Kanneliya far away from sites where other two species were distributed. Natural abundance is comparatively low for this species. In Peak Wilderness it was found along the same trail with *Z. regia* and *A. setaceus* but in different pockets. Environmental conditions of *Z. flava* are totally different when compared with the sites where other two species were found.

Anoetochilus setaceus was observed under same environmental conditions recorded by previous researchers, while other two species were found from entirely different environmental conditions from recorded data. Although literature reports that, *Z. regia* found together with *A. setaceus* under natural conditions, such combinations were not observed in both forests. They were found in entirely different locations.