

Nymphaea rubra Roxb. ex Andrews in Sri Lankan Fresh Waters

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Abstract

Native water lilies are wide spread in aquatic ecosystems in Sri Lanka and the Revised Handbook to the Flora of Ceylon has recognized only two native water-lilies, *Nymphaea nouchali* Burm. f. and *N. pubescens* Willd. However, another night blooming *Nymphaea* species with red flowers that is not either taxonomically described or recognized in the Flora during the revision occurs in many parts of the country. A detailed taxonomic investigation was carried out with field collected samples of all *Nymphaea* species occurring in local water bodies. Forty eight morphological characters were studied in detail and coded into a data matrix. Data were analysed using PAST software version 2.17.

The multivariate analysis separated this group of *Nymphaea* from the other native *Nymphaea* species as a separate phenetic group. Larger leaves (25-48 cm) with reddish purple abaxial and green adaxial surfaces, red petals and a larger number of stamens (62-103), and cream colour stigmatic head are important characters that separates the group from its close resemblance, *N. pubescens*. Comparing the morphological features of the individuals in this phenetic group with taxonomic descriptions of *N. rubra*, confirmed their identity as *N. rubra*.

A complete morphological description and an identification key to separate the different *Nymphaea* species occurring in Sri Lanka were constructed.

Keywords: Aquatic vegetation, Biodiversity, *Nymphaea rubra*