

SHORT COMMUNICATION

***Ottelia ovalifolia* subsp. *chrysobasis* (Hydrocharitaceae), a new Australian subspecies**

Cook and Urmi-Koenig (1984) revised *Ottelia* for Eurasia and Australasia recognising two species in Australia, *O. ovalifolia* (R. Br.) Rich. and *O. alismoides* (L.) Pers. *O. ovalifolia* is endemic to Australia while *O. alismoides* also grows in Indonesia and SE Asia. They did not see any collections of *O. ovalifolia* from northern Western Australia, stating that the species was ... 'generally widespread but ... not recorded from the northern half of W. Australia'. There are several specimens in PERTH dating from about 1955 from the Kimberley area and I have seen it growing there in extensive populations. In these populations the flowers have white petals with a golden-yellow base instead of the maroon or dark purplish base of the type form. There are no records of the type form from this area. There is one collection of the form with yellow petal bases from the Gulf of Carpentaria where it was growing in a pure population, and another collection from a suburb of Perth. Because of the distinctness of this form, its apparent genetic consistency, and its geographic isolation, it is here described as a new subspecies. Apart from the one distinctive character of the colour of the petal base, the new subspecies is very similar to the rest of *O. ovalifolia*, and is certainly much more similar to the type subspecies than to any other species in the genus. The appearance of scattered populations outside the normal distribution is a feature of many aquatic taxa.

***Ottelia ovalifolia* (R. Br.) Rich. subsp. *chrysobasis* S.W.L. Jacobs subsp. nov.**

O. ovalifoliae subsp. *ovalifoliae* affinis sed petalis basi aureis differt.

TYPE: WESTERN AUSTRALIA: c. 30 km downstream of Police Camp Bore, Lennard R., 17° 22' S 124° 32' E, S. Jacobs 5612 & P. Wilson, 11 May 1988; holo NSW; iso PERTH.

Monoecious tufted annual. Juvenile leaves linear, submerged; adult leaves with petiole and floating lamina; petiole length dependent on water depth; floating lamina elliptic, to 15 cm long and 7 cm wide, with 7–9 longitudinal veins (including the indistinct midrib). Cleistogamous flowers present though not common, submerged. Emergent flowers opening mid-morning and lasting one day; sepals narrow-triangular, to 22 mm long and 8 mm wide, apex obtuse; petals obovate, c. 3 cm long and 2 cm wide, white with a golden-yellow base.

DISTRIBUTION: Mainly in north Western Australia north of the Hammersley Range. One specimen each from the Gulf of Carpentaria, Queensland, and suburban Perth, Western Australia.

HABITAT: Ephemeral lagoons on alluvial floodplains.

NOTES: While the yellow-based petals are distinctive the new subspecies also has leaves that are at the top end of the size range for the species, and flowers that are at the small end of the range. The sepals tend to be comparatively shorter and wider than in the type subspecies though there is no clear break in the size range in this character. From my observations so far, cleistogamous flowers seem to be much less common in the new subspecies but this is a feature that seems to be heavily controlled by environmental factors and not too much should be made of this until the two taxa can be grown together and compared.

EPITHET: Named for the golden-yellow petal base, from the Greek *chryso-*, golden, *-basis* base.

SELECTED SPECIMENS SEEN: QUEENSLAND: Forked Lagoon, 'Wernadinga', Jacobs 1365, 30 Apr 1974 (NSW). WESTERN AUSTRALIA: Gosnells, Cranfield 1674, 10 Feb 1981 (PERTH); Gibb River, Gardner 9927, 30 Jan 1951 (PERTH); c. 23 km from 'Kimberley Downs' Hstd, Goble-Garrett 574, 14 May 1988 (PERTH); c. 21 km downstream of Police Camp Bore, Lennard R., Jacobs 5604 & P.G. Wilson, 11 May 1988 (NSW).

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References

- Cook, C.D.K. & Urmi-Koenig, K. (1984) A revision of the genus *Ottelia* (Hydrocharitaceae). 2. The species of Eurasia, Australia and America. *Aquatic Botany* 20: 131–177.

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