**EPIDENDRUM TRIPUNCTATUM** (ORCHIDACEAE, LAELIINAE):  
THE TALE OF TWO SPECIES

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ABSTRACT. Homonyms can often create confusion and this is the case with *Epidendrum tripunctatum*. A new combination, *Prosthechea micropus*, is required to correct the misapplied nomenclature. The author recognizes the Brazilian species as *Prosthechea punctifera* and the Central American species is recognized as *Prosthechea micropus*.

RESUMEN. El nombre *Epidendrum tripunctatum* fue usado por John Lindley para dos especies claramente diferentes; una de México, la otra de Brasil. Los homónimos pueden crear a menudo mucha confusión; en el caso referido es necesaria una nueva combinación, *Prosthechea micropus*, para corregir la nomenclatura errónea.


Introduction. When Lindley used the same name for two different species, one Mexican and one Brazilian in Folia Orchidacea (1853), it started a chain of confusion that continues to this day (Table 1). However Lindley is not alone and homonyms abound in taxonomic literature. After examining microfiches of the types at K-Lindl., it is clear that these two uses of *Epidendrum tripunctatum* Lindl. represent two different entities, although both would be included in *Encyclia* s.l. (Dressler 1961). The following combinations may be validly published, yet incorrect, as they are based on later and wrong homonyms:

*Prosthechea tripunctata* (Lindl.) W. E. Higgins,  
*Pollardia tripunctata* (Lindl.) Withner & Harding,  
Cattleyas & Relatives: Debatable Epidendrums, 244, 2004.

The Mexican Plant

John Lindley (1841) described a very distinctive species that he received from Richard Harrison, Esq. of Aighburgh, which was most likely of Mexican or Central American origin. Lindley described the plant as having long grassy leaves and a very short two-flowered scape. The sepals are twice as broad and much larger than the petals; both of them are widely spreading and a dull yellow green. The column is deep purple, with three lobes, each of which is tipped with one pale orange-colored spot. The lip is rather more than half an inch long, obovate, rugose, without being warted, and distinctly emarginate near the apex of the column; its color is pale citron. This plant (Fig. 1) was clearly the species we know today from Mexico. Dressler (1961) transferred the Mexican species to *Encyclia tripunctata* (Lindl.) Dressler. Higgins (1997) attempted to transfer the Mexican plant to *Prosthechea* but incorrectly cited the Brazilian homonym. Withner and Harding (2004) illustrated the Mexican species but cited the Brazilian basionym when they proposed the genus *Pollardia*. This leaves the Mexican species without a valid *Prosthechea* combination (or in *Pollardia* for that matter).

NEW NOMENCLATURE

*Prosthechea micropus* (Rchb.f.) W.E. Higgins comb. nova  
Basionym: *Epidendrum micropus* Rchb. f.  
1863. Type: Borsig s.n., cult. (W).  
Synonyms: *Encyclia tripunctata* (Lindl.) Dressler,


Note: The epithet “micropus” is a noun in apposition that remains “micropus” even under a feminine generic name. Another example of an indeclinable noun is “saxicola” therefore Orthophytum saxicola (Bromeliaceae).

**The Brazilian Plant**

Lindley (1853) described a Brazilian species using the same name Epidendrum tripunctatum. This plant collected in the wilds of Brazil and sent to Loddiges, was described as being much like Epidendrum calamarium Lindl. in form (fig. 2). Flowers yellowish, with three deep purple spots in the front of the calli, and two or three smaller on each side above the furrows of the lip. Reichenbach f. recognized the homonymy and published a new name for the second “E. tripunctatum” as Epidendrum punctiferum Rchb.f. in 1881. Pabst (1967) transferred the Brazilian species to Encyclia followed by Barros (1983) who transferred it to Anacheilium. When Higgins (1997) resurrected Prosthechea, he included the Brazilian species. The Withner and Harding combination and the Higgins combination based on Epidendrum tripunctatum Lindl., Fol. Orchid. Epidendrum 41, 1853 are superfluous. Withner and Harding include Epidendrum punctiferum Rchb.f. as a synonym of Anacheilium calamarium (Lindl.) Pabst, Moutinho & A.V.Pinto when E. punctiferum is a replacement name for E. tripunctatum (1853). Higgins treats Epidendrum punctiferum Rchb.f. as Prosthechea punctifera (Rchb.f.) W.E.Higgins.

**TAXONOMIC TREATMENT**


Pollardia tripunctata (Lindl.) Withner & Harding, Cattleyas & Relatives: Debatable Epidendrums 244. 2004 [nom. confus.]
Fig. 1. *Epidendrum tripunctatum* Lindl. 1841 [Type: K-Lindl.] Reproduced with the kind permission of the Director and Trustees of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew.
Fig. 2. *Epidendrum tripunctatum* Lindl. 1853  [Type: K-Lindl.] Reproduced with the kind permission of the Director and Trustees of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew.
Fig. 3. Drawings of: A. Prosthechea punctifera (No. 683) and B. Prosthechea calamaria (No. 679) from Pabst & Dungs, I:300, 1977.

Chronological Nomenclaturally Important Citations


*Epidendrum punctiferum* Rchb.f., Gard. Chron. n.s. 16: 38, 1881.


*Pollardia tripunctata* (Lindl.) Withner & Harding, Cattleyas & Relatives: Debatable Epidendrums, 244, 2004.


Related taxonomic treatment

Withner and Harding (2004) cite *Epidendrum punctiferum* Rchb.f. under the synonymy of *Anacheilium calamarium* (Lindl.) Pabst. When I examine the Lindley drawing on the type specimen sheet I find a number of differences in lip and callus shape. Thus it is my opinion that *Prosthechea calamaria* and *P. punctifera* are two distinct species (Fig. 3).


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**LITERATURE CITED**


