

***Lepanthes nivea* Luer, sp. nov.**

Planta grandis caulibus gracilibus, inflorescentia folio tenui acuminato purpurascenti brevior, racemo congestissimo, sepalis niveis breviter pubescentibus caudatis, petalis parvis transverse oblongis; labelli lobis lateralibus oblongis et appendice minuta pubescenti.

Plant large, epiphytic, densely caespitose; roots numerous, coarse. Secondary stems erect, slender, 20-30 cm long, enclosed by 15-17 close lepanthiform sheaths, microscopically ciliate along the ribs and ostia. Leaf erect, thinly coriaceous, purple beneath, oblong, 7-11 cm long, 2.5-3.5 cm wide, the apex acuminate, acute, the base rounded, abruptly contracted into a petiole 3-4 mm long. Inflorescence a successively flowered, congested raceme up to 3.5 cm long, borne by a filiform peduncle up to 2.5 cm long behind the leaf; floral bract 1.5 mm long; pedicel 2 mm long; ovary 5 mm long; sepals snow white, microscopically pubescent within, the dorsal sepal triangular, 13 mm long including the attenuate apex ca. 5 mm long, 7.25 mm wide, connate to the lateral sepals for 3 mm, the lateral sepals ovate, oblique, 14 mm long, 9.5 mm wide together, connate 5 mm, with a pair of rounded convexities at the base below the central apparatus; petals white, edged in purple, transversely oblong-bilobed, 1.75 mm long, 2.75 mm wide, the upper lobe oblong, the lower shorter, subfalcate; lip cream, the blades oblong, glabrous, 2 mm long, the apices narrowly obtuse, the bases rounded, the connectives broad, connate to the ventral surface of the column, the appendix triangular, pubescent, with a minute, terminal, pubescent gland; column flat, 1.5 mm long, the anther dorsal, the stigma ventral.

Etymology: From the Latin *niveus*, "snow-white," in allusion to the sepals.

Type: *ECUADOR*: ZAMORA-CHINCHIPE: epiphytic in cloud forest near the pass south of Yangana, alt. 2730 m, 12 May 1981, C. Luer, J. Luer, D. D'Alessandro et al. 6205 (Holotype: SEL).

The secondary stems of this species are proportionately slender for their length. The comparatively large, snow-white flowers with an edge of purple on the tiny petals contrasts with the thin, purple leaves. *Lepanthes nivea* is locally abundant at high altitudes in cold cloud forests in southern Ecuador.