

Masdevallia aops Luer & Malo, sp. nov.

Species haec Masdevalliae pallidae (Woolward) Luer persimilis, sed sepalis lateralibus sine maculis et carina petalorum cum ala supra medium et unco crasso supra basin differt.

Plant small, epiphytic, caespitose; roots slender, flexuous. Secondary stems blackish, unifoliate, 8-15 mm long, enclosed by 2-3 loose, tubular sheaths. Leaf erect to suberect, coriaceous, elliptical-spatulate, petiolate, 4-6 cm long including the 1.5-2.5 cm long petiole, 2-2.5 cm wide, the apex obtuse to rounded, tridenticulate, cuneate below into the channeled petiole. Inflorescence a solitary flower borne by an erect, slender, 4-4.5 cm long peduncle, with a bract near the base, from a node low on the secondary stem; floral bract tubular, 10 mm long; pedicel 10 mm long; ovary 7 mm long; sepals glabrous, white, suffused and veined in pale yellow, the dorsal sepal erect, obovate, concave above the middle, 21 mm long, 15 mm wide, connate to the lateral sepals for 4 mm, the rounded apex abruptly produced into an erect, filiform, yellow tail 3.5-4 cm long, the lateral sepals elliptical, oblique, wide-spread, connate 4 mm over a transverse fold beneath the column-foot, 18 mm long, 13 mm wide, the obtuse apices contracted into tails similar to that of the dorsal sepal; petals white, oblong, 6 mm long, 2-2.5 mm wide, the truncate apex tridentate, with a callus along the lower margin, produced into an obtuse wing above the middle and terminating in a thick, incurved, uncinat process above the unguiculate base; lip erect, white with purple flecks, oblong, 5.5 mm long, 3 mm wide, the rounded apex provided with a purple, central callus protruding beyond the margin, the rounded base hinged beneath; column white marked with purple, semiterete, 5 mm long, the apex toothed, the foot 4 mm long with an incurved extension.

ETYMOLOGY: From the Greek a-, "without," and ops, "eye, or eyed," in reference to the absent "eye-spots" of the lateral sepals.

TYPE: ECUADOR: MORONA-SANTIAGO: epiphytic in cloud forest of the Cordillera Oriental, alt. 1700 m, Apr. 1975, B. Malo s.n., cultivated near Cuenca, flowered in cult. 9 July 1977, C. Luer 1657 (Holotype: SEL).

DISTRIBUTION: Southeastern Ecuador.

Masdevallia aops was included in the distribution and discussion of M. pallida (Selbyana 2:377) because of the similarity of these two species. Recent examination of more living material leads me to the conclusion that the southeastern Ecuadorian population without the dark "eye-spots" on the bases of the lateral sepals is specifically distinct. In addition to the absence of the spots the carina of the petals is produced into a distinct wing above the middle in addition to the thick, incurved, uncinat process above the base.