

***Pleurothallis praealta* Luer & Hirtz, sp. nov.**

Fig. 50.

Ety.: From the Latin *praealtus*, "at a very high altitude," referring to the habitat.

Species haec *P. jamesonii* Lindl. affinis, sed labello trilobo, lobo antico subacuto convexo decurvo, lobis lateralibus erectis obtusis crassissimis distinguitur.

**Plant** medium in size, appears to have been growing terrestrially, caespitose; roots numerous, slender. Ramicauls fasciculate, stout, erect, 6-9 cm long, enclosed by 3 tubular, imbricating sheaths. **Leaf** erect, coriaceous, elliptical, subacute to obtuse, the blade 8-9 cm long, 2-2.5 cm wide, cuneate below into a subpetiolate base. **Inflorescence** racemose, racemes 1 or 2 simultaneous, secund, densely and simultaneously many-flowered, 18-23 cm long including the peduncle 8-9 cm long, subtended by a spathe 1.5 cm long, from an annulus 2 mm below the abscission layer; floral bracts 3-4 mm long, enclosing pedicel and ovary; pedicels 1.5 mm long; ovary 2 mm long; **sepals** white, subcarinate, minutely pubescent above the middle, the dorsal sepal ovate, acute, concave, 7.5 mm long, 4 mm wide unexpanded, 3-veined, the lateral sepals ovate, oblique, subacute to obtuse, 7 mm long, 3.75 mm wide, 3-veined, connate 1.5 mm; **petals** translucent with pink margins, elliptical-obovate, 4 mm long, 3 mm wide, 3-veined, the apex rounded, subapiculate; **lip** white, suffused with pink, fleshy, trilobed, 3.5 mm long, 2.5 mm wide, the middle lobe ovate, subacute, convex, decurved, the lateral lobes near the middle, erect, obtuse with irregular margins, very thick basally and cannot be spread, almost meeting in the midline, the disc narrowly concave between the callous lobes, continuous with the basal cavity, articulated with the end of the column-foot; **column** stout, 2 mm long, the foot thick, 1 mm long with the tip free, the anther, rostellum and stigma subapical.

ECUADOR: **Pichincha**: "North Pichincha," alt. 3800 m, Nov. 1983, *A. Hirtz 1389* (Holotype: MO), C. Luer illustr. 14932.

This species from a very high altitude in northern Ecuador is closely related to *P. jamesonii* of lower altitudes. Vegetatively and florally they are very similar, but *P. praealta* is distinguished by the thick, trilobed lip with a convex and decurved, triangular, anterior lobe, resembling a parrot's beak. The erect lateral lobes are very thickened, especially at the base, the two lobes nearly meeting, separated only by a deep, midline cleft. The lateral lobes cannot be spread without fracturing the lip.

