

Masdevallia encephala

LUER & R. ESCOBAR
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Type: Colombia. Santander, Munic. of Charalá, between Virolín and Páramo de la Rusia, alt. 2200-2600 m, 1975, collected by J. Guevara, cultivated by M. & O. Robledo at La Ceja, *R. Escobar 1682* (holotype, JAUM).

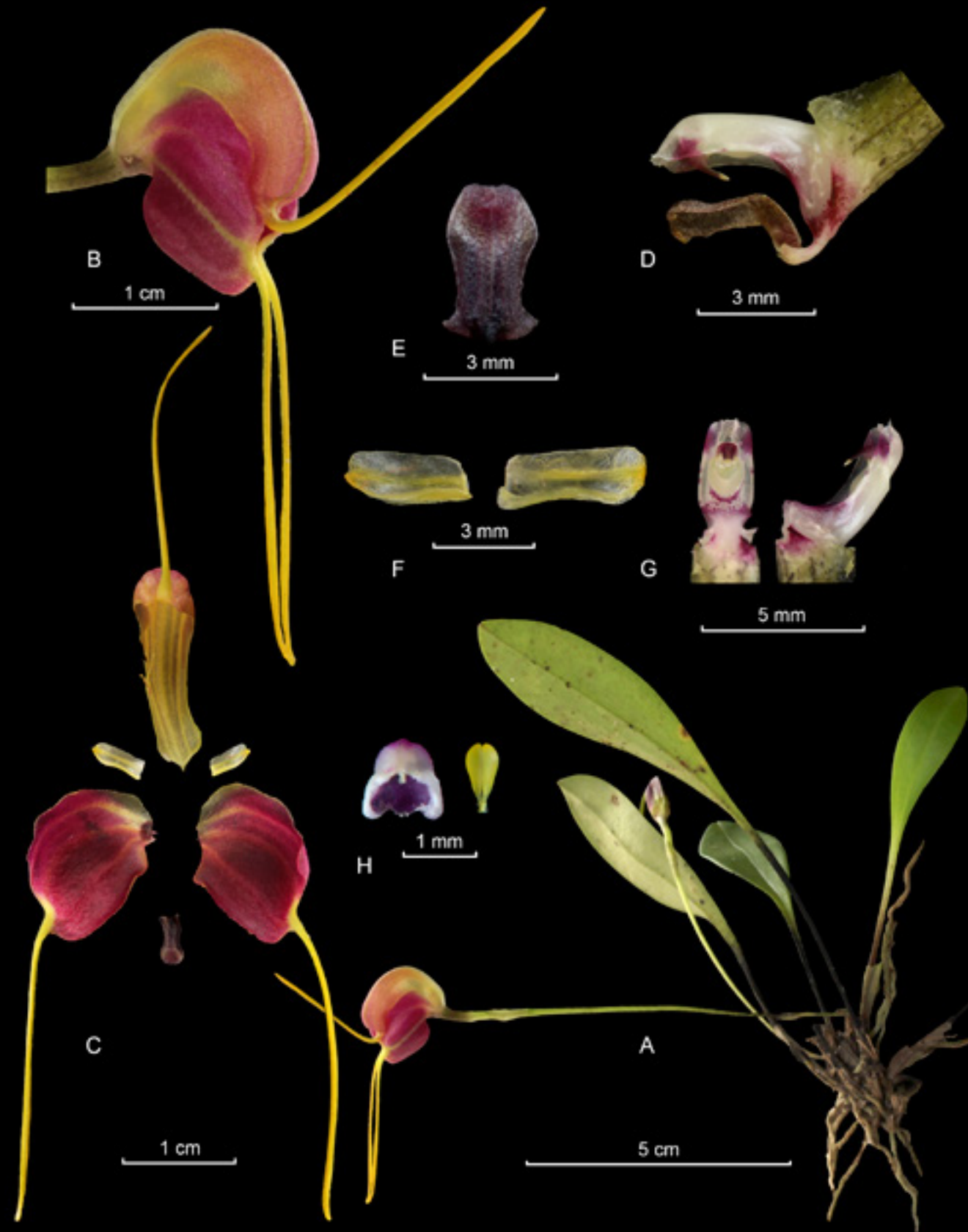
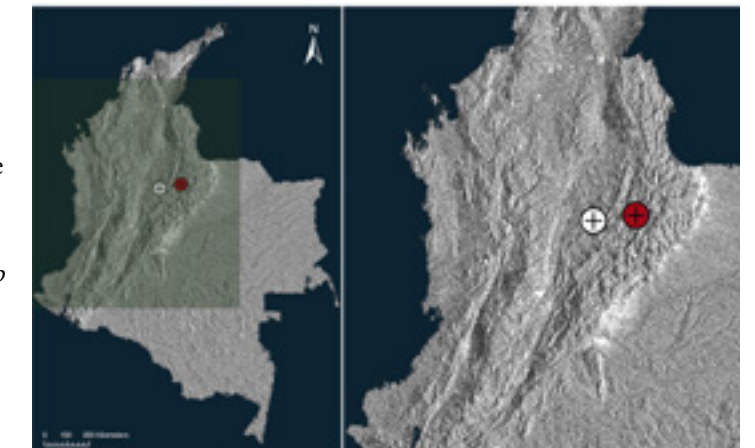
Illustrated specimen: Colombia, Santander, Vélez province, municipality of La Belleza, Vereda Vista Hermosa, 2450 m, 27 April. 2016. *Nicolas Gutiérrez M 007* (JBB; LCDP voucher).

Plant epiphytic, caespitose, 10–11 cm tall. *Roots* flexuous, slender. *Ramicauls* blackish, erect, about 1 cm long, enclosed by 2–3 thin tubular sheaths. *Leaves* erect, thinly coriaceous, long-petiolate, the blade elliptical, obtuse, lamina 4–6 cm long, 1.2–2.0 cm wide, the petiole blackish, 3–5 cm long. *Inflorescence* a single-flowered, suberect raceme, 7–8 cm long including the peduncle, with a 8 mm long basal bract. *Floral bract* tubular, 9 mm long. *Pedice* greenish, cylindrical, 1.0–1.1 cm long; *ovary* purplish, cylindrical, 5 mm long. *Sepals* with the blades fused into a sub-globose, laterally compressed flower, with loose, microscopically glandular, tails. *Dorsal sepal* yellow, suffused with pale salmon-pink externally, arcuate, concave, oblong, blade 17–18 × 5 mm, the rounded apex contracted into a slender yellow tail 2.3–2.4 mm long. *Lateral sepals* yellow, heavily suffused with rose-pink, suborbicular, the blades forming a deeply saccate synsepal 1.2–1.3 × 2.0–2.1 mm, the obtuse apices contracted into yellow tails similar to that of the dorsal sepal, 2.5 mm long. *Petals* translucent yellow, more or less oblong, 4 × 1.5–1.6 mm, the obtuse apex apiculate, the labellar margin with a longitudinal callus. *Lip*, white densely dotted with purple, purple at the base and on the apical callus, oblong-subpandurate, apically truncate, with a conspicuous central callus forming an apicule, margins irregular, base truncate, hinged to the column foot, 3.5–3.6 × 2.0–2.1 mm. *Column* white, with purple markings, cylindrical, 4 mm, column foot short and stout, with a slightly incurved extension, 1 mm long. *Stigma* ventral. *Anther cap* incumbent, cucullate, white with purple markings, 1 mm wide. *Pollinia* two, yellow, obovoid, laterally flattened, about 1 mm long, joint by a pair of flat, granular caudicles.

The habit of *Masdevallia encephala* is quite like any other species of the genus, however, the inflated, almost completely fused, sepal blades, and bristle-like tails result in a very unique sub-globose flower. The name, which means “the brain” refers to the particular morphology of these rose colored flowers. The species is endemic to Colombia, where it is known by a few collections in Boyacá and Santander.

References:

Luer, C. A. 2003. Icones Pleurothallidarum 22. Systematics of *Masdevallia* part three. *Monographs in systematic botany from the Missouri Botanical Garden*: 86.



LCDP: *Masdevallia encephala* Luer & R. Escobar. A. Habit. B. Flower. C. Dissected perianth. D. Column and lip in lateral view, E. Lip. F. Petals. G. Columns in ventral and lateral views. H. Anther cap and pollinia.

