**Section Proboscidioides** (Rolfe) E. A. Christ., stat. nov.

DISCUSSION: This monotypic subgenus is problematic in several ways. It is unique in a broadly defined Phalaenopsis in having an extremely long, beak-like rostellum; Sweet (1980) likened it to an elephant's head and trunk. Unlike other species of Phalaenopsis noted for their longer than typical rostellums (such as those of section Esmeralda), the rostellum of P lowii far surpasses the stigma and is about as long as the entire column. This long rostellum, at a more or less right angle to the column, positions the viscidium very differently from other species. Phalaenopsis lowii also differs from all other species in the genus by having the lateral lobes of the lip in the form of recurved hooks. Restricted to a rather small area of Myanmar and Thailand, P lowii has a deciduous habit and bears four separate pollinia, characters it shares with subgenera Aphyllae and Parishianae. I have speculated elsewhere on the possible relationship of P lowii to the monotypic Nothodoritis Tsi of China, and I still believe that Nothodoritis is the most closely related genus to Phalaenopsis as circumscribed here. They share the characters of a deciduous habit, an elongate rostellum (and concomitant elongate stipe of the pollinarium), and four separate pollinia. The lip of P lowii, however, is unlike the highly un-usual lip found in Nothodoritis and similar to other species of Phalaenop-sis in the callus morphology, in the presence of slightly raised teeth on the lateral lobes of the lip, and in overall gestalt, especially evident in recent color photographs. Also, there is no trace of the peculiar col-umn appendage found in Nothodoritis in P lowii. Emphasizing the similarity in lip morphology, I retain P lowii in a broadly defined Phalaenop-sis, noting the isolated position it occupies. A different and equally valid approach would be to separate P lowii as a new genus on the basis of its rostellum morphology. Such a "solution" would have the advantage of removing a somewhat discordant morphology from Phalaenopsis, albeit altering a stable nomenclature in the process. I do not take this approach: the general consensus among taxonomists working on paleotropical orchids is to try to avoid making new monotypic genera just to provide a "quick fix" to a monograph in hand. This is especially true in the Aeridinae, already rife with mono-typic genera, where generic limits have been confused until relatively recently. Fine tuning of generic limits is not to be done casually be-cause of the ramifications of altering names and should preferably proceed only after molecular data or data from other modern techniques has been considered. Having said that, I should also state that if P lowii had been described historically as a separate genus, I would not rush to merge such a genus with Phalaenopsis until new data became available. Most likely, subgenus Proboscidioides is a basal group to the rest of the genus, and its removal would not change the scientific integrity of Phalaenopsis (i.e., removing P lowii from Phalaenopsis in the broad sense would not create any paraphyletic groups). 2

References

1Jay Pfahl's IOSPE at[www.orchidspecies.com](http://www.orchidspecies.com)

2**Christenson, Eric A. 2001.** *Phalaenopsis- A Monograph.* Timber Press.

3**Cribb, CJ. 2014.** Epidendroidae. In: Pridgeon AM, Cribb PJ, Chase MW, Rasmussen F, eds. *Genera Orchidacearum,* *Vol. 6*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 344-349.