

## **DISTRIBUTION PATTERN OF *EXACUM BICOLOR* ROXB., A GENTIAN ENDEMIC TO PENINSULAR INDIA**

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**ABSTRACT :** *Exacum bicolor* Roxb. is a wild endemic plant to Peninsular India, which has great potential to be domesticated as an ornamental plant. A perusal of literature also indicates that the plant was used by traditional medical practitioners for treatment of various ailments like fever, skin diseases and diabetes. It was also reported as stomachic and tonic. The plant was very common in almost all districts of the state about 8-10 decades ago. But due to severe habitat destruction, the plant is getting endangered and likely to be extinct in the plains of Kerala. *Exacum bicolor* prefers open grasslands of plains as well as high ranges. Present study revealed that the plant occurs only in ten districts of Kerala with frequency below 50% in seven districts. Occurrence of the plant was more in the northern districts of Kerala when compared to southern districts. Frequency of distribution was maximum for Malappuram and Wayanad districts. But density and abundance were the highest in Thrissur district. Altitudinal comparison revealed that density and abundance were more in the plains than at high ranges. More than 95 percent of the grasslands in plains are in private possession which makes the situation all the more worse for the plant to escape from habitat loss.

**Key Words :** Country krait, endemic gentian, *Exacum bicolor*, Gentianaceae, habitat destruction, herbaceous perennial