Durban grass *Dactyloctenium austral* Steud. (Poaceae), an addition to the Flora of Telangana State, India

Nagaraju Siddabathula¹, Paramesh L², Ravi Kiran Arigela¹

ABSTRACT

*Dactyloctenium austral* Steud. was collected from Telangana State and reported here as an addition to the Flora of Telangana. A detailed description and colour photographs of this wild fodder grass were provided to facilitate identification.

Key words: Fodder, Grass, New record, Poaceae, Wildlife

1. INTRODUCTION

The genus *Dactyloctenium* Willd. of Poaceae, subfamily Chloridoideae, tribe Cynodonteae, subtribe Dactylocteniinae (Soreng et al., 2017) is native to Africa. It comprises 13 species worldwide, of which 4 species exist in India (Prasanna et al., 2020; Kellogg’s et al., 2020). Further, only 3 taxa distributed in southern India (Nagaraju, 2020) and they are good fodder sources for wildlife and domestic cattle. The genus is characterized by axis of spikes terminating in sharp point, spikes digitate, rarely racemose, upper glume mucronate or awned and differs from *Eleusine* Gaertn. by its raceme axis terminating with sharp bare point (Nagaraju et al., 2020). During the course of botanical explorations in Telangana State, a grass sample was collected from Shadnagar, Rangareddy District, Telangana. Literature survey (Bor, 1960) and consultation of herbaria revealed that, the grass is *Dactyloctenium austral* Steud. Previously this species recorded only from Maharashtra (Potdar et al., 2012) and not reported from any other state of India. Authors reported as a new record to the Flora of Telangana and identified specimen (BSID 008938) deposited at BSID, Hyderabad. *D. austral* commonly known as Sweet smoother grass or Durban grass. This grass supports the local wildlife being a source of fodder and also acts as a great soil binder.

2. TAXONOMIC TREATMENT

*Dactyloctenium austral* Steud., Syn. Pl. Glumac. 1(3): 212. 1854; Bor, Grasses Burma, Ceylon, India & Pakistan 489. 1960; Karthik. & al., Fl. Ind. Enum. Monocot. 204. 1989. (Figure 1)
Figure 1: A. Habit; B–D. Inflorescence; E. Node; F. Ligule; G & H. Abaxial and adaxial view -a portion of the spike; I. Spikelet; J. Lower glume; K. Upper glume; L. Lemma; M. Palea; N. Stamens with pistil.
Stoloniferous perennial; culms slender, 30–85 cm. high, erect or geniculately ascending; nodes glabrous, brown, rooting at lower nodes; internodes 10–15 cm long. Leaves mostly cauline; leaf sheaths 2–12 cm long, compressed, keeled, glabrous; ligule ciliate, 0.5–1.3 mm long; leaf blades linear-lanceolate, 5–35 × 0.5–1 cm, flat, base rounded-subcordate, bulbous based hairs along the margins, apex acuminate; abaxial midvein having bulbous based hairy. Inflorescence composed of 1–4 racemes. Spikelets 3–5 flowered, oblong-elliptic, back of the rachis keeled. Lower glume oblong, 1–2 × 0.5–0.8 mm, margins entire, apex, chartaceous, light pinkish in color, keeled; keel margin serrulate. Upper glume ovate-ovate, 1.5–2.3 × 0.5–1 mm, margin entire, apex rounded to truncate, chartaceous, keeled; keel extended in to a stout awn, 2–2.8 mm long, antrorsely barbed, green in color. Lemmas broadly ovate, 2.5–3 × 2–3 mm, margin entire, apex acuminate, chartaceous, keeled; keel extended in to a stout awn, 1–1.2 mm long, keel scabrid. Palea lanceolate-ovate, 2–2.8 × 0.5–0.8 mm, margins entire, apex acute, keeled; keel scabrid. Stamens 3, filaments 0.3–0.6 mm long, anthers ca.0.45 × 0.3mm. Ovary ovate-oblong ca. 0.55 × 0.3 mm.

**Flower & Fruiting:** August–October

**Distribution:** Maharashtra, Telangana.

**Specimen examined:** India: Telangana, Rangareddy district, Shadnagar, (N 17.12477°, E 78.27546°, 607 msl), 20.07.2020, S. Nagaraju 008938 (BSID).

**Acknowledgements**
The authors are thankful to the Director, Botanical Survey of India, Kolkata and the Scientist In-charge, BSI, Deccan Regional Centre, Hyderabad for facilities.

**Authors Contribution:**
All authors have contributed equally to manuscript.

**Funding:**
This research received no external funding.

**Conflicts of interest:**
The authors declare no conflict of interest.

**Data and materials availability**
All data associated with this study are present in the paper.

**REFERENCES AND NOTES**