

Buellia maharajensis (New Lichen Species)

Prelims: Current events of national and international importance | Environment

Why in News?

Researchers have discovered a new lichen species named *Buellia maharajensis* in Mathikettan Shola National Park, located in the Idukki district of Kerala.

- **Family** - Belongs to the family **Caliciaceae** and the genus ***Buellia***.
- It is a **saxicolous lichen**, meaning it grows exclusively anchored directly onto rock surfaces.
- **Ecological Role**- Like other lichens, it represents a composite, symbiotic partnership between a fungus (mycobiont) and a photosynthetic algal or cyanobacterial partner (photobiont).
- **Etymology** - Named "*maharajensis*" in honor of **Maharaja's College, Ernakulam**.
- It recognizes the institution's 150th anniversary and its historical contributions to botanical research in the region.
- **Discovery Site** - Uncovered within **Mathikettan Shola National Park** in the high ranges of Idukki district, Kerala (Western Ghats).
- **Elevation** - Recorded growing at an elevation of around **1,351 meters above sea level** in montane wet grassland/rocky outcrop micro-habitats.
- **Local Biodiversity Milestone** - Represents the **4th new lichen species** to science discovered from Mathikettan Shola National Park.
- **Environmental Indicators** - Lichens lack root systems and absorb water and nutrients directly from the air, making them exceptional **bio-indicators of**
 - **Air quality,**
 - **Atmospheric pollution, and**
 - **Microclimatic stability** in delicate Shola-grassland ecosystems.
- Along with the new discovery, the same survey reported *Buellia hemisphaerica* and *Buellia nilgiriensis* as new species records for the state of Kerala.



Reference

[The Hindu | New lichen species](#)