

26

www.biodiversityjournal.com

ISSN 2039-0394 (Print Edition)
ISSN 2039-0408 (Online Edition)

with the support of



Biodiversity Journal

MARCH 2017, 8 (1): 1-314

FOR NATURALISTIC RESEARCH
AND ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES



Xanthostemon aurantiacus (Brongn. et Gris) Schltr. - Chutes de la Madeleine, New Caledonia

New Caledonia. New Caledonia is a hot spot with a high degree of endemism and a rich biodiversity (for instance about 3.300 species of plants have been recorded thus far, including the richest concentration of conifers in the world: 44 species, among them 13 species of the genus *Araucaria* and the only known parasitic conifer, i.e. *Parasitaxus ustus*). The presence of several phylogenetic relicts and the circumstance that it was originally a fragment of Gondwana pointed towards a “continental island”, but more recently, geological evidence indicating Palaeocene and Eocene submersions and biogeographic and molecular phylogenetic studies support the view that New Caledonia is a biota not older than the Oligocene (Grandcolas et al., 2008). The island is therefore a "Darwinian island", although an old and large one. The main island (Grande Terre) hosts a diverse array of habitats, including moist lowland forest, cloud forest, dry forest, mangroves, savannah and the "maquis minier": this strange habitat is characterized by the presence of ultramafic rocks, toxic and poor of nutrients for the majority of plants. Nonetheless several endemic species of plants thrive there, forming a landscape somewhat similar to the South African Fynbos, although in the tropics. The images show some fine examples of the flora typical of maquis minier: a small *Lomandra insularis* (Asparagusaceae) (right, center) growing in the middle of lichens (*Cladia retipora* and *Cladonia pycnoclada*) (also right, top), and the flower of *Cunonia macrophylla* (Cunionaceae) (right, bottom).

Alberto Ballerio, Viale Venezia 45, 25123 Brescia, Italy;
e-mail: alberto.ballerio.bs@aballerio.it

