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RESEARCH ARTICLE

## A fundamental shift in the distribution pattern of *Hermanssonia centrifuga* (*Meruliaceae*, *Basidiomycota*): new evidence from Ukraine

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**Abstract.** We report the first Ukrainian records of *Hermanssonia centrifuga* (*Meruliaceae*) outside the Carpathian region. Traditionally, the species has been considered restricted to boreo-montane forest vegetation and climatic conditions. Its discovery in the plain part of the country highlights the recently reported fundamental change in the distribution pattern of the fungus. The importance of the records, ecology and taxonomy of the species are briefly discussed. We hypothesise that the species reached the northern part of Ukraine through the densely forested cross-border region of Polissia, and that the hemiboreal primeval woodlands of the Białowieża Forest (Belarus, Poland) represent the most likely dispersal centre.

**Keywords:** citizen science, distribution, new records, *Phlebia* s. l., Polissia, *Polyporales*, wood-inhabiting fungi

### Introduction

In recent years, Ukrainian mycology and biodiversity studies overall are becoming more and more reliant on observations made by non-professionals (Prylutskiy, Kapets, 2024). Amateur-collected data have already significantly contributed to the knowledge of the distribution of some legally protected species, revealing numerous localities which were unlikely to have been visited by a few professional mycologists in the country (Shevchenko et al., 2019, 2021; Heluta et al., 2022). These efforts are crucial

for the national biodiversity assessment and provide invaluable information about previously unknown biodiversity hotspots requiring legal protection (Peter et al., 2021; Prylutskiy, Kapets, 2024).

Despite the platform's technical limitations, the Facebook citizen science community "Fungi of Ukraine" ("Гриби України", <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1054204501266549/>) remains the primary source of amateur-collected locality data used for the majority of Ukrainian mycological publications (Prylutskiy, Kapets, 2024). This article continues a series of publications on the distribution

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patterns of noteworthy basidiomycetes (see Heluta, 2018, 2019; Heluta, Zykova, 2018, 2019; Heluta et al., 2019; Shevchenko et al., 2019, 2021; Popova, 2021; Prydiuk, Balahura, 2021; Makarenko, Heluta, 2023; Prydiuk, Fedorova, 2023; Hayova, 2024; Martyniuk et al., 2024; Prydiuk, Safina, 2024; Tkachenko, Prydiuk, 2026) and is another example of a fruitful collaboration between professional mycologists and the members of this community.

The diversity of the aphyllorphoroid fungi in Ukraine remains insufficiently studied, except for the small number of territories exposed to focused research. Undoubtedly, the City of Kyiv and its closest environs represent one of these relatively well-surveyed areas in the country. The earliest records of aphyllorphoroid fungi here date back to the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Valts, Rishavi, 1871) and have continued since then until today (Ivanenko, 2020; Heluta et al., 2024). According to the biogeographical zonation commonly applied in Ukrainian mycological publications (Heluta, 1989), the territory of the city is divided into four major regions: the Central (Right-Bank) Polissia, the Left-Bank Polissia, the Right-Bank Forest-Steppe and the Left-Bank Forest-Steppe. The heterogeneity of the natural conditions within this relatively small area is a premise of its high fungal diversity. Furthermore, the geographical proximity to leading centres of Ukrainian mycological research and well-developed logistical infrastructure make the city's urban forests convenient model areas for representing their entire biogeographical region. Over a century of mycological studies in Kyiv city forests has led to a relatively complete understanding of the composition of local species, especially regarding macrofungi that are recognisable in the field.

In this regard, the first record of *Hermanssonia centrifuga* (P. Karst.) Zmitr., a conspicuous and easily identifiable corticioid fungus (Eriksson et al., 1981; Bernicchia, Gorjón, 2010; Zibarová, Pouska, 2020), in one of the city forests of Kyiv is most probably a sign of the change in the distribution pattern of this species rather than a result of insufficient surveying. Over the last decade, this rather typical species of the primeval and old-growth spruce-dominated forests has begun to spread into the lowland habitats in Central Europe (Tejcklová, Zibarová, 2020; Zibarová, Pouska, 2020; Tejcklová, Zibarová, 2023; Zibarová et al., 2024). The discovery of *H. centrifuga* in the plain part of Ukraine likewise appears, on a local scale, to reflect this recent expansion trend.

*Hermanssonia*, introduced as a monotypic genus in 2018, was named in honour of the Swedish mycologist J. Hermansson, who studied the diversity and taxonomy of various fungal groups in Northern Europe (Zmitrovich, 2018). Today, the genus is represented by two genetically and morphologically related species: *Hermanssonia centrifuga* (P. Karst.) Zmitr. and recently described *H. fimbriata* Z.B. Liu & Y.C. Dai (Liu et al., 2022).

Originally, *Hermanssonia centrifuga* was described as a species within *Phlebia* (as *P. centrifuga* P. Karst.) and is still regarded as a part of the genus by many researchers (Tejcklová, Zibarová, 2020; Komonen et al., 2021; Moor et al., 2021; Sum et al., 2024), as well as by the *Mycobank* database (<https://www.mycobank.org/>). Either way, the genera *Hermanssonia* and *Phlebia* are closely related and, along with non-poroid representatives of *Merulius*, *Mycoacia*, *Mycoaciella* and some other genera within *Meruliaceae*, are often referred to as the "phlebioid fungi" or *Phlebia* s. l. (Nakasone, Burdsall, 1984; Nakasone, 1997, 2002; Parmasto, Hallenberg, 2000; Bernicchia, Gorjón, 2010; Holec et al., 2015; Liu et al., 2022; Zhao et al., 2023). This paraphyletic group (Motato-Vásquez et al., 2022; Zhao et al., 2023) is characterised by gelatinous to corneous fruitbodies, palisade-like hymenium with densely arranged narrowly clavate basidia, hyaline thin-walled spores with no reaction in IKI, bipolar mating system and astatocoenocytic nuclear behaviour (Larsson et al., 2004; Bernicchia, Gorjón, 2010).

Based on the newly available records of *Hermanssonia centrifuga* in Ukraine, the present study aims to update its distribution pattern within the country and propose a hypothesis regarding the species' probable dispersal centre.

## Materials and Methods

The specimen was discovered by K.I. Fedorova during a casual walk through the territory of the Darnytsia Forest Park Municipal Enterprise in Kyiv on 15 October 2024. After the discovery, the location was revisited, and the development of the fruitbody was carefully documented during several weeks. On 26 October 2024, the specimen was collected and dried at room temperature. Identity of the find was confirmed by both micromorphological examination and molecular analysis. The following year, on 14 November 2025, another locality was discovered by Dr. M.V. Shevchenko during the complex

biodiversity survey of the Ivankiv territorial community. Although the collected material unmistakably exhibited diagnostic characters of the species, the dried fruitbody turned out to be sterile due to contamination with a mycophilic fungus.

Microscopic structures of the fruitbodies were studied in 5% KOH solution. Spore sizes are given based on 20 measurements. Basidia sizes are provided based on 10 measurements. In the descriptions of the microscopic features, the following abbreviations are used: av. W = average width of basidiospores; av. L = average length of basidiospores; Q = length/width ratio of basidiospores; av. Q = average length/width ratio of basidiospores. Specimens are deposited in the Fungarium of the National Herbarium of Ukraine at the M.G. Kholodny Institute of Botany, NAS of Ukraine, Kyiv (KW-M).

The species was identified according to Hansen and Knudsen (1997), Bernicchia and Gorjón (2010). The scientific name is provided according to the *Index Fungorum* database (<https://www.indexfungorum.org/>). The maps (Figs 3, 4) were created using QGIS 3.28.0 software.

DNA extraction was performed using the Biocore Spin-Food DNA-50 extraction kit (Biocore Technology, Ukraine). During lysis 4 µL of Proteinase K (Qiagen, Germany) were added to each sample immediately before use; after that samples were incubated at 55 °C for 3 hours. Other steps were performed following the manufacturer's instructions. The nrITS region was amplified using ITS1-F (Gardes, Bruns, 1993) and ITS4 (White et al., 1990) primers with DreamTaq Green PCR Master Mix 2X (Thermo Fisher Scientific Baltics, Lithuania) following the standard protocol (White et al., 1990). The PCR product was sequenced at Macrogen Europe (Amsterdam, the Netherlands). Species identification was confirmed by BLAST analysis against *GenBank* (<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/genbank/>) and *UNITE* (<https://unite.ut.ee>) databases.

## Results

*Hermanssonia centrifuga* (P. Karst.) Zmitr., *Folia Cryptog. Petropolitana* (Sankt-Peterburg) 6: 100. 2018 — Figs. 1, 2.

≡ *Phlebia centrifuga* P. Karst., *Meddn Soc. Fauna Flora fenn.* 6: 10. 1881.

GenBank accession number: PZ390507

Fruitbody thin, up to 3 mm thick, annual, resupinate, rubbery, waxy, forming irregular merging

patches on substrate. Hymenophore phlebioid, radially wrinkled at the early stages of development, but becomes tuberculate upon merging, white to cream-coloured; pinkish near the edge when young. With age, the fruitbody turns pale dirty orange to straw-coloured. Margin fimbriate, at first strikingly pinkish to lilac, becomes faded with age.

Hyphal system monomitic, hyphae densely interwoven and difficult to discern, 2–3 µm in diameter, clamped at all septa, thin-walled, hyaline. Hymenium without cystidia or any other sterile elements. Basidia 23–27 × 5–6 µm, narrow, 4-spored, basally clamped. Basidiospores (6.8–)7–9.4 × 2.5–3.2 µm, Q = 2.1–3.3, av. L = 7.97 µm, av. B = 3.11 µm, av. Q = 2.58; cylindrical, smooth, thin-walled, hyaline. No amyloid or dextrinoid reaction in hyphae, basidia or basidiospores.

**Specimens examined:** Kyiv City, Desnianskyi District, Darnytsia Forest Park Municipal Enterprise, Darnytsia forestry, quarter 41, Darnytsia river valley, N 50°29'09", E 30°37'09", 110 m a.s.l., human-influenced alluvial forest with *Acer platanoides* L., *A. negundo* L., *Alnus glutinosa* (L.) Gaertn., *Betula* sp. and *Populus tremula* L., on the naturally fallen trunk of *Betula* sp., 26.10.2024 (KW-M71508), leg. K.I. Fedorova, det. O.M. Bohoslavets (Fig. 3); Kyiv Region, Vyshhorod District, Ivankiv territorial community, environs of Stanishivka village, Stolychnyi Forest Office Branch of the State Specialised Forest Enterprise "Forests of Ukraine", Ivankivske Forestry Management Unit, Obukhovychi forestry, quarter 16, Murava river terrace, N 50°56'23", E 29°43'38", 160 m a.s.l., mature human-influenced forest with *Pinus sylvestris* L., *Quercus robur* L. and *Betula pendula* Roth., on the naturally fallen trunk of *Pinus sylvestris*, 14.11.2025 (KW-M71865), leg. et det. M.V. Shevchenko.

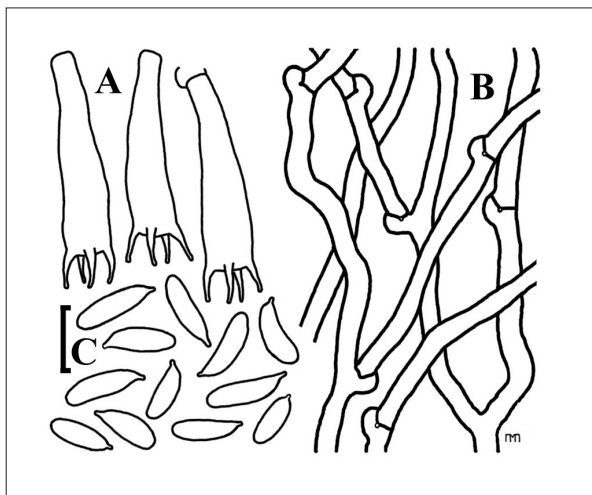
**Other known localities:** *Ivano-Frankivsk* Region, Nadvirna District, vicinity of the village of Zelena, Gorgany Nature Reserve, Ancient and Primeval Beech Forests of the Carpathians and Other Regions of Europe UNESCO World Heritage Site, Dzhurdzhynets stream valley, N 48°28'27", E 24°18'31", 1020 m a.s.l., primeval spruce forest in lower part of the forest belt on rich soil, on saw cut surface of naturally fallen trunk of *Picea abies* (L.) H. Karst. 46 cm in diameter, 07.10.2021 (KW-M71506), leg. et det. O.M. Bohoslavets; N 48°28'19", E 24°18'33", 1040 m a.s.l., on underside of fallen trunk of *Picea abies* 29 cm in diameter, 18.10.2022, not. O.M. Bohoslavets; N 48°28'36", E 24°18'11",



**Fig. 1.** Development of the fruitbodies of *Hermanssonia centrifuga* (KW-M71508). A: fruitbodies emerging as bright pink to lilac, small fimbriate patches on the substrate; B: individual patches growing radially; C: individual basidiomata starting to merge as they grow, the hymenophore displays a distinct radially wrinkled pattern; D: upon merging, the radial texture of the hymenophore becoming less evident with the margins getting paler; E: tuberculate hymenophore surface after incorporating the initially separate radially wrinkled fruitbodies; F: fruitbody turning pale dirty orange to straw-coloured with age, although a characteristic pinkish tint and radially structured parts of the hymenophore remain visible

1020 m a.s.l., on underside of fallen trunk of *Picea abies* 53 cm in diameter, 18.10.2022, not. O.M. Bohoslavets; outside the Ancient and Primeval Beech Forests of the Carpathians and Other Regions of

Europe UNESCO World Heritage Site, N 48°28'49", E 24°17'13", 815 m a.s.l., near-natural spruce forest in lower part of the forest belt on rich soil, on saw cut surface of fragment of naturally fallen trunk of



**Fig. 2.** Microscopic features of *Hermanssonia centrifuga* (KW-M71506). A: basidia; B: hyphae with clamps; C: spores. Bar: 10  $\mu$ m

*Picea abies* 30 cm in diameter, 30.09.2022, not. O.M. Bohoslavets; Kosiv District, vicinity of the village of Yavoriv, N 48°15'59", E 24°58'15", 660 m a.s.l., highly fragmented man-influenced spruce forest in lower part of the forest belt on rich soil, on saw cut surface of naturally fallen trunk of *Picea abies* 60 cm in diameter, 24.08.2022, not. O.M. Bohoslavets (Bohoslavets, Prydiuk, 2023). *Zakarpatska* (*Transcarpathian*) Region, Rakhiv District, vicinities of the village of Dilove, Bilyi Potik stream valley, October 1935 (PRM26184, PRM23688, PRM23690), leg. et det. A. Pilát; vicinities of the village of Kostylivka, Lishchynka stream valley, August 1936 (PRM28595, PRM28662, PRM28723, PRM29017, PRM29052, PRM34351, PRM34352), leg. et det. A. Pilát; vicinities of the town of Rakhiv, August 1937 (PRM489124, PRM492071), leg. et det. A. Pilát; Berlebash stream valley, August 1937 (PRM488260, PRM488602, PRM488737, PRM488799, PRM497193), leg. et det. A. Pilát (Pilát, 1940); Tlachiv District, vicinities of the village of Mala Uholka, Carpathian Biosphere Reserve, Uholka-Shyrokyi Luh protected massif, Ancient and Primeval Beech Forests of the Carpathians and Other Regions of Europe UNESCO World Heritage Site, primeval beech forest, N 48°15'48", E 23°37'06", 680 m a.s.l., 11.09.2013 (CWU(MYC)6742), leg. et det. O.V. Ordynets (Savchenko et al., 2024).

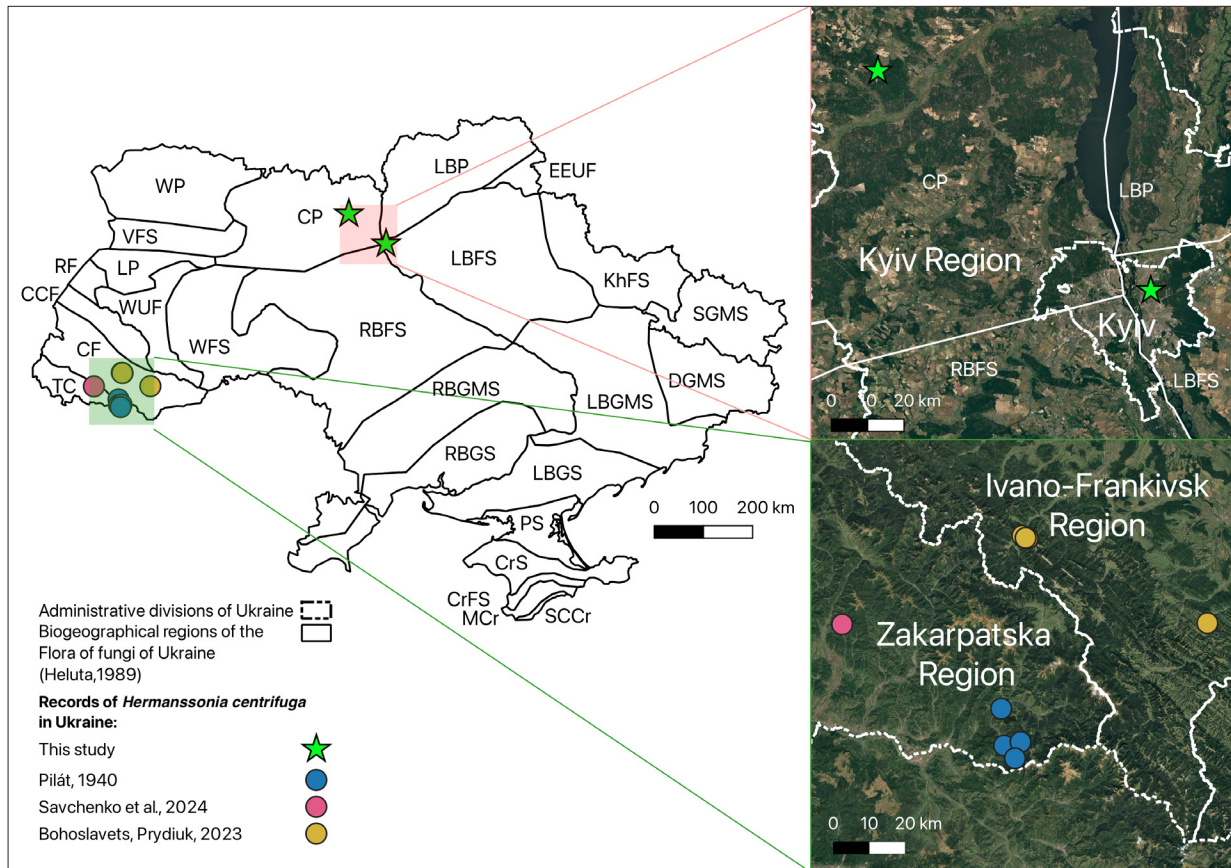
**General distribution.** Europe: Austria, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany,

Greece, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, North Macedonia, Norway, Poland, RF, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Ukraine (Eriksson et al., 1981; Hallenberg, 1984; Lanquetin, Meyer, 1991; Zervakis et al., 1998; Dämon, 2001; Wojewoda, 2003; Yurchenko, 2003; Bernicchia, Gorjón, 2010; Karadelev et al., 2018; Gross et al., 2020; GBIF, 2026–onward). Asia: Iran, Japan, Nepal, RF (Hjortstam, Ryvarde, 1984; Franzén et al., 2006; Hallenberg, 1981; GBIF, 2026–onward). North America: Canada, USA (Cooke, 1956; Hallenberg, 1984).

## Discussion

Traditionally, the ecology of *Hermanssonia centrifuga* has been described as rather specialised, with a strong association with the old-growth boreo-montane spruce-dominated forests (Eriksson et al., 1981; Nordén, Larsson, 2000; Holec et al., 2015). Consequently, the species was regarded as a reliable indicator of the conservation value of such ecosystems (Kotiranta, Niemelä, 1993; Parmasto, Parmasto, 1997; Tortić, 1998; Dvořák et al., 2017). In terms of substrate specialization, *H. centrifuga* shows a clear preference for the coniferous deadwood, especially *Picea* spp. (Eriksson et al., 1981; Hansen, Knudsen, 1997; Dvořák et al., 2017), but is also known from wood of various angiosperms and gymnosperms (Cooke, 1956; Hallenberg, 1981, 1984; Tortić, 1998; Zervakis et al., 1998; Holec et al., 2015). These characteristics are consistent with all previous records of the fungus from the Ukrainian Carpathians (Pilát, 1940; Bohoslavets, Prydiuk, 2023; Savchenko et al., 2024), but do not align well with our finds of *H. centrifuga* in human-influenced forests of the nemoral zone.

The phenomenon of the recent spread of *Hermanssonia centrifuga* outside of well-preserved natural forests with *Picea* is well-documented in the Czech Republic and Slovakia (Tejcklová, Zíbarová, 2020, 2023; Zíbarová, Pouska, 2020; Zíbarová et al., 2024). As a consequence, the conservation status of the species in the most recent edition of the Red List of Fungi (macromycetes) of the Czech Republic has changed from Endangered (Holec, Beran, 2006) to Least Concern (Zíbarová et al., 2024). Moreover, *H. centrifuga* is listed among the species, which have clearly become more widespread in the country, contrary to most fungi on the list, which have been reassessed based on a more comprehensive approach to the threat evaluation (Zíbarová et al., 2024).

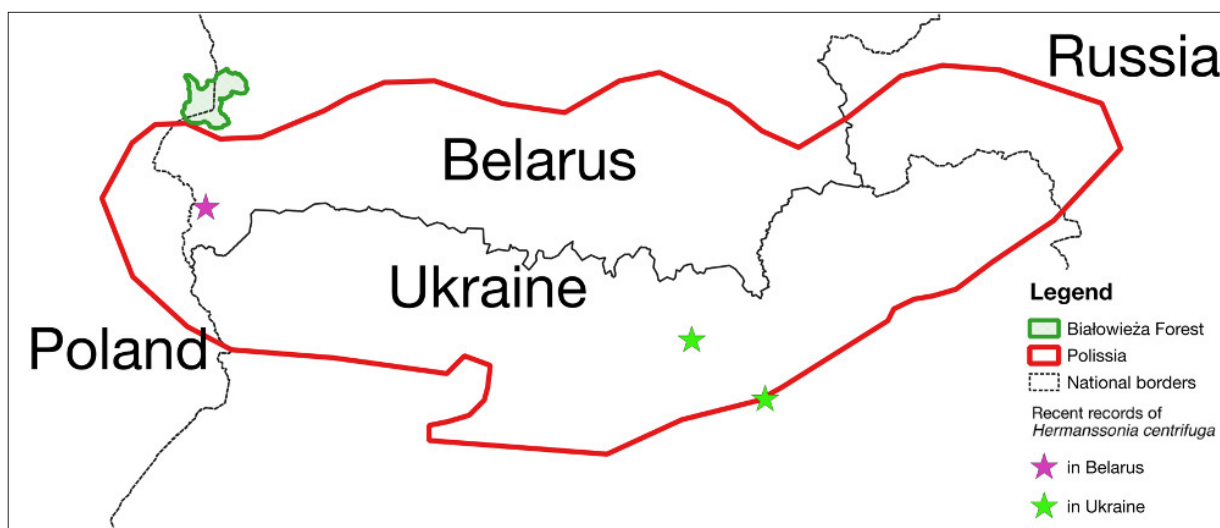


**Fig. 3.** Records of *Hermanssonia centrifuga* in Ukraine. Regions of the *Flora of Fungi of Ukraine* (Heluta, 1989) are given as follows: CF — Carpathian Forests, CP — Central (Right-Bank) Polissia, CCF — Cis-Carpathian Forests, CrFS — Crimean Forest-Steppe, CrS — Crimean Steppe, DGMS — Donetsk Grass-Meadow Steppe, EEUF — East European (Central Russian) Upland Forests, KhFS — Kharkiv Forest-Steppe, LBGMS — Left-Bank Grass-Meadow Steppe, LBP — Left-Bank Polissia, LP — Lesser Polissia, MCr — Mountain Crimea, PS — Polynovi (*Artemisia*) Steppe, RBGMS — Right-Bank Grass-Meadow Steppe, RBGS — Right-Bank Grass Steppe, RBFS — Right-Bank Forest-Steppe, RF — Roztochchia Forests, SCCr — South Coast of Crimea, SGMS — Starobilsk Grass-Meadow Steppe, TC — Transcarpathia, VFS — Volyn (Volhynian) Forest-Steppe, WFS — Western Forest-Steppe, WP — Western Polissia, WUF — Western Ukrainian Forests

The reasons for the shift in the distribution pattern of the fungus remain unclear. Tejklová and Zíbarová (2023) hypothesise that the recent emergence of some boreo-montane fungi in lowland habitats may be caused by changes in modern forestry (primarily concerning the increase in deadwood volume and shadiness in forest stands) and additionally facilitated by microclimate similarities between montane ravine ecosystems and lowland alluvial valleys. Dispersal peculiarities of *Hermanssonia centrifuga* could also contribute to the phenomenon. Nordén and Larsson (2000) have shown that basidiospore dissemination of the species is rather efficient, and it is unlikely that the distribution of the

fungus is limited by dispersal distance. As a result, there are prospects for the establishment of *H. centrifuga* in suitable habitats, including human-made forests with sufficient amounts of deadwood (Nordén, Larsson, 2000). It is worth noticing, however, that the transformed localities discussed in this article are not characterised by a significant amount of dead wood anyhow comparable to the old-growth boreo-montane forests.

However efficient the spore dispersal of the species might be, vitality and spread of airborne propagules are limited by solar radiation and temperature fluctuations, especially in the case of species with thin-walled hyaline basidiospores (Ingold,



**Fig. 4.** Hypothetical spread of *Hermanssonia centrifuga* from the Białowieża Forest region through the Polissia region. The borders of Polissia are schematically given according to Barbarych (1977) and Dementyev et al. (1977)

1971; Norros et al., 2015). According to Nordén and Larsson (2000), basidiospore deposition is most efficient in the range of 100 m around a fruitbody of *Hermanssonia centrifuga*. As fruitbody formation in basidiomycetes requires somatogamy between two viable spores, the probability of such an encounter declines dramatically even with a moderate increase in distances from the nearest fruitbodies. Population genetic studies of *H. centrifuga* in the Northern Europe (Franzén et al., 2007) have shown the moderate genetic differentiation among populations inhabiting fragmented and isolated habitats, with the highest levels of divergence observed in populations located furthest from areas of continuous habitat. This differentiation is increased by the limited gene flow, enabling the genetic drift in the isolated populations.

Overall, the distribution of wood-inhabiting fungi is heavily reliant on habitat connectivity (Abrego et al., 2015), so it is very likely that the species has reached its newly discovered localities through a continuous biodiversity corridor, or at least through a near-continuous step-stone one.

The Darnytsia Forest Park Municipal Enterprise, where *Hermanssonia centrifuga* was first discovered in the plain part of Ukraine, is located in the north-westernmost part of the Left-Bank Forest-Steppe, immediately adjacent to the Left-Bank Polissia region (Fig. 3). The locality of the second record is likewise situated in the northern part of the country

(Central Polissia). Considering the presumed area of origin of the discovered populations, we hypothesise that the spread of the species has reached the region through the densely forested cross-border region of Polissia, rather than from its previously known habitats in the Ukrainian Carpathians, as such a dispersal route would require the species to traverse the heavily transformed and largely deforested forest-steppe terrains.

Polissia (also transliterated from several languages as Polissya, Polesie, Polesia, etc.) is a vast lowland area within the East European Plain, occupying mainly the river basin of the Prypiat River and parts of the catchment areas of the Western Bug, Desna and Dnipro rivers. It is stretching across the Ukrainian-Belarusian border, additionally occupying smaller adjacent parts of Poland and RF. Significant part of the region is covered with wetlands and nemoral forests, composed primarily of *Pinus sylvestris* and *Quercus robur* (Barbarych, 1977; Dementyev et al., 1977).

At the northern limits of the Belarusian and Polish parts of Polissia in the hemiboreal zone lays the Białowieża Forest—a cross-border UNESCO World Heritage site, protecting the largest remainder of the primeval forest once covering the European Plain (Fig. 4). This vast woodland is an important biodiversity hotspot and a refugium for many dead-wood-associated species confined to primeval forests (Holec et al., 2025). *Hermanssonia centrifuga*

is known from both Belarusian and Polish parts of the Białowieża Forest since the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Kamarova, 1965; Wojewoda, 2003; Yurchenko, 2003). In our opinion, local hemiboreal primeval forests might represent a dispersal centre, from which newly discovered populations from Northern Ukraine originate. A recent amateur record of *H. centrifuga* in the western part of Belarusian Polissia (<https://www.gbif.org/occurrence/6130368382>) may support our hypothesis.

We presume that, in the nearest future, the spread of *Hermanssonia centrifuga* to the lowland habitats may have an impact on the geographically isolated montane populations of the fungus in Central and Eastern Europe. Due to significant expansion of the distribution range, the genetic isolation of those populations and the consequent processes of their gradual divergence may be reduced by the increased gene flow within the continuous or interlinked habitats.

The first records of *Hermanssonia centrifuga* in the plain part of Ukraine extend the knowledge about the change in the distribution pattern of the species and highlight the importance of a comprehensive study of distribution of corticioid fungi in the country. In the next few years, we expect more finds of the species outside the Carpathian region. Further extensive monitoring of the potential localities of *H. centrifuga* by professional mycologists and amateurs is a premise of accurate reevaluation of its ecological preferences.

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## ETHICS DECLARATION

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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**Істотні зміни в поширенні *Hermanssonia centrifuga* (Meruliaceae, Basidiomycota): нові відомості з України**

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**Реферат.** Повідомляється про перші знахідки *Hermanssonia centrifuga* (Meruliaceae) на території України за межами Карпатського регіону. Традиційно цей вид вважався приуроченим до бореомонтанних лісових угруповань і кліматичних умов. Його виявлення на рівнинній частині України свідчить про суттєві зміни у поширенні гриба. У статті коротко розглянуто значення знахідок, екологію і таксономічне положення виду. Ми припускаємо, що цей вид потрапив до північної частини України через Полісся — густо заліснений транскордонний регіон, а найімовірнішим центром його поширення є гемібореальні праліси Біловезької пущі (Білорусь, Польща).

**Ключові слова:** громадянська наука, дереворуйнівні гриби, нові знахідки, Полісся, поширення, *Phlebia* s. l., *Polyporales*