Bryocentria hypothallina (Hypocreales) – a new species on Metzgeria furcata

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Summary: Bryocentria hypothallina (Bionectriaceae, Hypocreales) is described as a new species. It grows necrotopically on the liverwort Metzgeria furcata (Metzgeriales), causing bleached, insular infections. Ascomata are formed on the ventral side of the thalli and perforate them from below. The novel ascomycete species is recorded from France, Norway, and Spain. Thus, the obligately bryophilous genus Bryocentria now includes eight species. Our new species is characterized ecologically by its specialized microhabitat, and morphologically by having ascospores bearing tiny cyanophilous warts.

Keywords: Bryophily, hepaticolous ascomycetes, liverworts as hosts, necrotrophic parasites, thallus perforation.

Introduction

During fieldwork in temperate forests in Norway, France and Spain, bleached, necrotic patches of the liverwort Metzgeria furcata were detected on trunks of deciduous trees. Closer examination revealed the presence of a necrotrophic ascomycete that is presented below as a new species.

Material and methods

The specimens were studied using standard methods. Measurements and illustrations of ascomata were done in tap water, those of excipular cells, asci, ascospores (n=40), and hyphae in lactophenol cotton blue.

Taxonomy

Bryocentria hypothallina B. Nordén, Gardiennet, Priou & Döbbeler, sp. nov. (Bionectriaceae, Hypocreales) Figs 1–2

Mycobank MB812619

Diagnosis: Perithecia thallos hospitis perforantia, globosa, auran-
tiaca usque ad flavia, 160–220 μm diam., Excipulum cellulis regu-
larihmis vel rotundatis, 5–11(–13) μm largis, pariellinis cyanophilis formatum. Asci cylindrici vel in parte media vel basali leviter dilatati, (33–)36–50(–55) × 5–6.5(–7) μm, octospori. Ascosporeae incoloratae, anguste ellipsoidales, bicel-
luares, 8–10 × 2.5–3.5 μm, verruculis cyanophilis ornatae. Habitat parasite in hepaticis corticalibus speciei Metzgeria furcata laesiones albidas in hospite efficiens.

Type: Norway, Rogaland, Strand, Rag, broadleaved forest, on bark of old Fraxinus excelsior, 59°06′07″N, 05°57′49″E, alt. 90 m, 4 Oct 2012, B. Nordén & J.B. Jordal A12-4214 (holotype, O).

Etymology: hypo (gr.) = below, thallinus (gr./lat.) = adjective pertaining to the thallus, the whole referring to the position of the ascomata.

Description: Ascomata perithecial, perforating the thallus from the ventral side, orange to yellowish, globose, (140–160–220 μm diam., sometimes with a few short, colourless, blunt, up to 3.5 μm wide setae positioned apically; apical part of the ascoma disk-like when seen from above, 50–75 μm diam., delimited by unaltered host cells, with an inconspicuous, pore-like ostiole in the centre; os-
Remarks: The infected host plants die off, lose their light green colour and become bleached. Several liverwort thallus layers may be interconnected by hyphae. Ascomata form at both sides of the midrib on the ventral thallus side. Perforation of the one-celled thick thallus occurs rather late in the fungus’ development, once the ascomata reach about 80 μm in diameter. Hyphae at the apical part of the ascomata can grow between adjacent cells and disrupt them. The irregularly delimited hyphal tissue expands by causing the disintegration of host cells. A flat disk results, forming the ascomatal apex. Mature ascocarps covered by dead, but structurally unaltered host cells usually protrude slightly above the thallus level.

In herbarium material the vivid colour of the fruit-bodies soon begins to disappear. Several-month-old ascocarps may be completely colourless and therefore hard to distinguish from the substrate. *Bryocentria hypothallina* exhibits the key characters of *Bryocentria* including the definitive excipular structure, its habit of forming numerous thin-walled asci, and having one-septate ascospores with cyanophilous structures (DÖBBELER, 2004, 2010). Apart from *B. brongniartii*, the type of the genus, all congeneric species are necrotrophic parasites. The hepaticolous *B. brongniartii* on *Frullania dilatata* and *B. merospora* on epiphyllous *Lejeuneaceae* both perforate the leaves of their hosts. *Bryocentria metzgeriae* is another obligate leaf or thallus perforator infecting corticolous liverworts, including *Metzgeria furcata*. It differs from *B. hypothallina* by having smaller (up to 7.5 μm long), fusiform ascospores with a central cyanophilous band.

**Fig. 1. — *Bryocentria hypothallina* on epiphytic *Metzgeria furcata*. a. Habitat, La Gacilly, les Bresles, France. b. Whitish, dead thalli of *M. furcata* with several orange-coloured ascocarps in different developmental stages, three in dorsal, two in side view. c. Ascocarps in side view. d. Ascocarps, ventral view. e. Mature ascocarps in water. f. Ascus in cotton blue. g. Two ascospores in cotton blue showing cyanophilous warts. a, b, c, d, e: J.-P. Priou 15082. f, g: Nordén & Jordal A12-4214 (holotype). Scale bars: b: 1 mm, c-d: 400 μm, e: 20 μm, f-g: 5 μm. Photos: a, b, c, d, e: Priou; f, g: Nordén.
Fig. 2. — a. Thallus of *Metzgeria furcato* with several *Bryocentria hypothallina* ascomata in different developmental stages, dorsal view. Scale bar: 600 μm. b. Young ascoma showing initial, intercellular thallus perforation, dorsal view. c. Mature ascoma with apical disc and central ostiole between disrupted and dissolved host cells, dorsal view. Scale bar b, c: 100 μm. d. Asci. Scale bar: 15 μm. e. Ascospores. Scale bar: 5 μm. a, b, c: Nordén & Jordal A12-4331, d, e: Nordén & Jordal A12-4214 (holotype).
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References