

LICHENICOLOUS FUNGI IN ITALY

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The study of lichenicolous fungi began with great enthusiasm in the second half of the 19th century and was then almost forgotten for nearly a hundred years, until at the end of the 20th century a renaissance began. But still even in Europe lichenicolous fungi are underrecorded and each year a lot of undescribed species are found.

In 2006 I began investigations on lichenicolous fungi in the very South of Italy and could add more than 20 species to the flora of Sicily, among them the newly described *Phoma ficuzzae*, growing on *Ramalina fraxinea*. The next year more than 40 species were added and the new species *Zwackhiomyces echinulatus*, growing on *Physconia distorta* was described. Also this species was found in the Bosco della Ficuzza, a site extremely rich in epiphytic lichens.

In 2010 I had a 4-week excursion to Puglia and Basilicata resulting in a list of 92 species, among them several new finds for Italy. With *Asteroglobolus* a new genus could be described from the Parco Nazionale del Pollino, as well as two new species, *Phoma melanelixiae* and *Unguiculariopsis lucaniae*. The specimens collected during an excursion to Marche and Abruzzo in 2011 are still waiting for identification.

It is obvious that in the mountainous regions and landscapes far from the coast and urban settlements a rich flora of lichenicolous fungi, partly rare specialists, can be found, whereas in the bigger towns and their surroundings common species like *Cladosporium licheniphilum*, *Marchandiomyces aurantiacus*, or *Xanthoriicola physciae* on nitrophilous lichens such as *Physcia* spp. and *Xanthoria parietina* are predominant. It is noteworthy that some species confined to *X. parietina* like *Pronectria xanthoriae* or *Telogalla olivieri* could not be found until now in the vast populations of *X. parietina* of the Po plain, whereas they are not rare in southern Italy. Future investigations will show if such specialists are really restricted to pristine habitats. Nevertheless, only few km away from the town of Siena such highly specialized species as *Dactylospora lobariella*, growing on *Lobaria pulmonaria*, can be found.

The project is still at an early stage, as systematic investigations in many regions, mainly in central and northern Italy, are still missing.