

A new species of lichen discovered in the Iberian Peninsula

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A new *Phylloblastia incidental* lichen has been found in the Iberian Peninsula.
Credit: Esteve Llop.

Spanish scientists have described the lichen *Phylloblastia fortuita*, new to the Iberian Peninsula and to science. Another species from the same family, *Phylloblastia dispersa*, is also a new entry for Europe and is the first time it has been found outside the tropics.

Foliicolous lichens, symbiosis between [fungi](#) and [algae](#), are organisms associated with [tropical](#) or sub-tropical climates, and their presence in environments such as the Iberian Peninsula, outside of the tropics, is associated with conditions of very stable ecological and [environmental conditions](#)

"We have identified three *Phylloblastia* lichens in the Iberian Peninsula, one of which is new to science (*Phylloblastia fortuita*), and we present a fourth species new to European flora, *Phylloblastia dispersa*", Esteve Llop, main author and research at the Departamento de Biología Vegetal-Botánica [Department of Plant-Botanical Biology] of the University of Barcelona (UB) explains to SINC.

Together, the scientists Esteve Llop and Antonio Gómez-Bolea analysed the lichen flora in a protected area near Barcelona. Although some species of lichen have already been recorded on leaves in the North East of the Iberian Peninsula, this is the first time new species have been described.

The study, recently published in *The Lichenologist*, brings together biological material that had not been identified by researchers in a previous study carried out in 2006, as well as new material related to previous samples. Llop points out that "the literature about the group to which the samples belong had increased because of contributions from intertropical zones with extratropical species".

The field of study where the lichens were found in Catalonia is also important for science. The presence of *Phylloblastia fortuita* in the [Iberian Peninsula](#) and of *Phylloblastia dispersa* in Europe reveals areas of "great sensitivity" to environmental changes and may serve as indicators of climatic change.

The biologist states that "we have found a new area with Follicolous lichen [flora](#), rich in important plant life, which, as in other locations, is associated with conditions of ecological and environmental stability", and concludes: "Scientists consider the importance of protecting these locations based on their relevance to ecology and biodiversity".

More information: Llop, Esteve; Gómez-Bolea, Antonio. "The lichen

genus *Phylloblastia* (Verrucariaceae) in the Iberian Peninsula, with a new species from Western Europe", *Lichenologist* 41: 565-569 Part 6, Nov 2009.

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