



***Ophioparma rubricosa*, an extremely rare lichen from Sardinia (Italy)**

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The mountains of Sardinia host relicts of old-growth forest with a very rich and peculiar lichen diversity. The crustose lichen species *Ophioparma rubricosa* (Müll. Arg.) Ekman appears particularly interesting. This species, dependent on old conifer trees, was recorded for the first time in Europe by Zedda & Sipman (2001), found on decorticated wood of an old tree of *Juniperus oxycedrus* L. in the Supramonte mountains. At that time, the species was only known from North America. The collected specimen presented soralia-like structures, hence the authors thought that it might deserve its own taxonomic status. A few years later a very similar lichen was found in Spain on ancient *Juniperus* and was described as a new species (*Ophioparma junipericola*) (Martínez & Aragón 2003). Tang et al. (2018) reported *O. rubricosa* from one locality in China, Xizang province (Tibet), on bark at 4400 m altitude. Recently, *O. rubricosa* has been reported also from southern Norway, on an old *Pinus* stump in a boreal, old-growth conifer forest/mire complex (Timdal & Spribille in press).

During a survey of old forests in the Supramonte in 2025, we observed that the species is still present in the same locality. A small sample was collected for sequencing the ITS marker in order to study the phylogenetic relation of the Sardinian with the Spanish, Norwegian and American populations. The Sardinian specimen appears to be closely related to three specimens from Norway and America and falls into the *O. rubricosa* clade. Fresh material for sequencing from Spain is still missing.

The species has been probably overlooked in other European regions so far, and it is unknown from other localities in Sardinia. The area has a strict level of protection that should be extended to this species too. Studies are ongoing to detect a possible presence in other montane areas.