

**Does *Laboulbenia formicarum* (Ascomycota:  
Laboulbeniales) fungus infect the invasive garden ant,  
*Lasius neglectus* (Hymenoptera: Formicidae),  
in Hungary?**

Fertőzi-e a *Laboulbenia formicarum* (Ascomycota: Laboulbeniales) gomba az  
invázió *Lasius neglectus* (Hymenoptera: Formicidae)  
hangyafajt Magyarországon?

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**Abstract:** *Laboulbenia formicarum* Thaxt. (Ascomycota: Laboulbeniales) fungus is native to N-America and has just been recorded from Europe from the invasive ant *Lasius neglectus* van Loon, Boomsma et Andrásfalvy, 1990 (Hymenoptera: Formicidae). The ant is well-known from Hungary but the fungus is not known from there. We checked the infection of *L. formicarum* at the Hungarian *L. neglectus* localities and had negative results.

**Keywords:** ant, adventive, ectoparasite, fungus, invasive, *Laboulbenia formicarum*, *Lasius neglectus*, Hungary.

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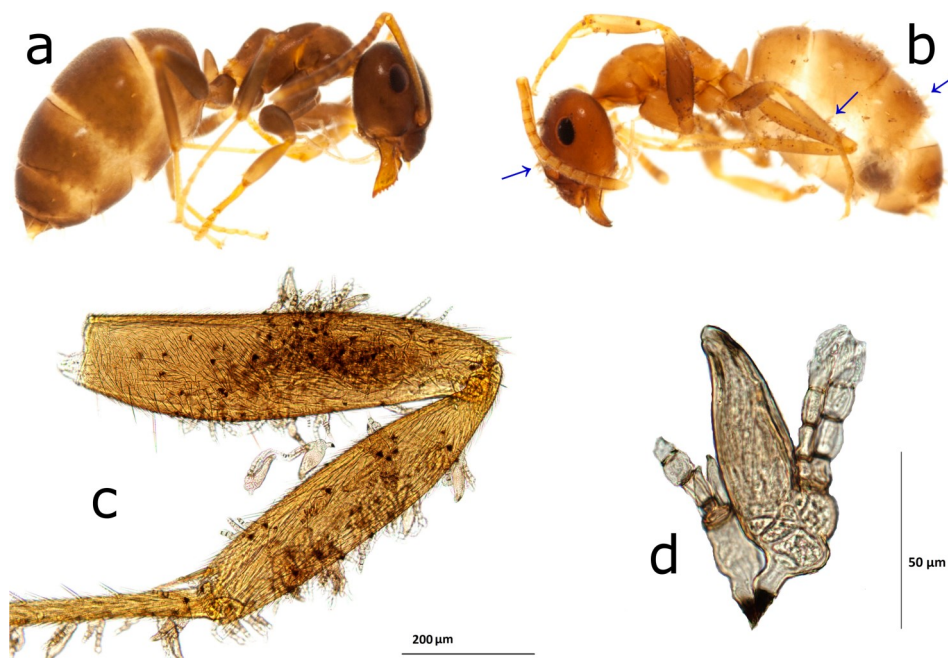
**Összefoglalás:** Az Észak-Amerikában őshonos *Laboulbenia formicarum* Thaxt. (Ascomycota: Laboulbeniales) gomba nemrégiben került elő Európából az invázió *Lasius neglectus* van Loon, Boomsma et Andrásfalvy, 1990 (Hymenoptera: Formicidae) hangyáról. Bár ez a hangyafaj jól ismert Magyarországról, a gomba még nem került elő onnan. Megvizsgáltuk ezért az ismert magyarországi *L. neglectus* lelőhelyeket, hogy megtaláljuk-e hangyákon a *L. formicarum* gombát, azonban negatív eredményeket kaptunk.

## Introduction

Laboulbeniales (Ascomycota) fungi are ectoparasites of arthropods (Kirk et al. 2008; Rossi & Santamaria 2012). Their effects on the host is poorly known (Weir et al. 2005; Báthori et al. 2015; Konrad et al. 2015). The lifespan of infected hosts can shorten a little but not on an extreme level

(Csata et al. 2014; Báthori et al. 2015; Konrad et al. 2015; and references therein). The thalli of these fungi typically grow on their hosts without inflicting any noticeable injury (Espadaler & Santamaria 2012). Most Laboulbeniales fungi exhibit extreme host-specificity; the host spectrum ranges from single (stenotopic) to multiple host species (eurytopic) (Haelewaters et al. 2012 and references therein). Ants are the only known hosts of Laboulbeniales in the order Hymenoptera (Espadaler and Santamaria 2003). Four species of Laboulbeniales fungi have been reported so far to parasitize ants in Europe (Espadaler and Santamaria 2012; Haelewaters 2012; Báthori et al. 2014) and only six of them from all over the world (Santamaria and Espadaler 2014). *Rickia wasmannii* Cavara is the only such fungus species recorded from Hungary up to now (Tartally et al. 2007) and *Laboulbenia camponoti* S.W.T. Batra from other parts of the Carpathian-Basin, close to the Hungarian borders (Báthori et al. 2014). The two other European ant parasitic Laboulbeniales fungi have not been recorded from Hungary yet: *Rickia lenoirii* Santam. have just been described (Santamaria and Espadaler 2014) and *Laboulbenia formicarum* Thaxt. (Figure 1) is an invader to Europe. The latter is native to N-America where it infects 21 ant species and it was recently recorded from Europe only on *Lasius grandis* Forel, 1909 from Madeira and on *L. neglectus* van Loon, Boomsma et Andrásfalvy, 1990 (Figure 1) from Spain and France (for a review: Espadaler & Santamaria 2012).

*Lasius neglectus* is invasive to Europe (Cremer et al. 2008), polygynous (Espadaler et al. 2004) and therefore can form huge supercolonies connecting numerous nests within a large area (van Loon et al. 1990; Tartally 2006; Espadaler et al. 2007). It is able to displace the native ant species and can cause drastic effects on the arthropod assemblages within the area of the supercolonies (Tartally 2000a; Nagy et al. 2009). This ant is originated somewhere from Asia Minor (Anatolia) or Turkey (Seifert 2000) but its exact origin and way to Hungary is unknown (Ugelvig et al. 2008). Its (social)parasites could help to fulfil this gap, as e.g. the case about the Mediterranean *Platyarthrus scoblii* Budde-Lund, 1885 myrmecophylous isopod, which is recorded from Hungary only from and from around (super) colonies of *L. neglectus* (Tartally et al. 2004; Hornung et al. 2005). This ant has several (super)colonies in Hungary (see up-to-date list: Espadaler & Bernal 2015) and was described from there (van Loon et al. 1990). According to the above described reasons which show that it would be interesting to know whether *L. formicarum* occurs in Hungary, we decided to check the infection of *L. neglectus* by *L. formicarum* at all of the recently known (Tartally 2000b; Tartally et al. 2004; and an unpublished colony from



**Figure 1.** *Lasius neglectus* workers uninfected (a) and infected (b, see e.g. arrows) with *La-boulbenia formicarum*, and a *L. neglectus* leg (c) covered with thalli of *L. formicarum* (d) (photos by W. P. Pfliegler; collected by A. Tartally: a, X. Espadaler: b-d)

Solymár, found by A. Meszlényi, pers. comm; and another one from Budapest at Belgrád Quey found by J. S. Pedersen and R. S. Larsen, pers. comm.) Hungarian *L. neglectus* localities.

### Materials and Methods

We tried to collect samples from all the known Hungarian *L. neglectus* localities in September 2014. This period was chosen because Herriaz & Espadaler (2007) found several infected *L. neglectus* individuals in September, so the infection is detectable this month. The aimed sample size was minimum 100 *L. neglectus* workers per locality. We thought this sample size to be enough because earlier studies found 28.8-88 % of *L. neglectus* workers to be infected in the case of infected supercolonies (Herriaz & Espadaler 2007; Espadaler et al. 2011). When a colony was small, had smaller nesting area than 1 m<sup>2</sup>, collecting was possible only from one point but in the case of large supercolonies collecting was done from three different points, as far from each other as possible. The collecting points (Table 1) were recorded by a Garmin Oregon 650t GPS. The ants were taken to 67.5% ethanol and the presence of infection was checked under a Leica MZ12.5 stereomicroscope at magnifications of 10x-160x (thalli of *L. formicarum* can be easily realised by stereomicroscope: Espadaler et al. 2011).

## Results

4706 *L. neglectus* workers were checked from 21 Hungarian (super)colonies (Table 1) in total but the presence of *L. formicarum* have not been detected. It should be noted that we had no luck to collect the aimed minimum 100 workers from colonies at Árpád-Bridge (Budapest), Tigris Str. (Budapest), Belgrád Quey (Budapest) and at Solymár. Moreover the earlier supercolony at Galvani Str. (Budapest) seems to have been disappeared despite thorough searching. On the other hand, the colony at Orom Str., thought to be formerly disappeared (Tartally et al. 2004), is rediscovered now (or a new one is discovered) some tens of meters farther from the original locality. The exact locality at Tahi is not known (Tartally et al. 2004), therefore no collecting was possible from there.

## Discussion

It is difficult to prove if some species is missing from an area. According to the results, we can simply conclude that none of the examined 4706 *L. neglectus* workers were infected. It should be noted that there is a big chance that *L. neglectus* is more widespread in Hungary than it is presently known as most of the 21 known (Table 1) Hungarian localities were recorded by luck. On the other hand, it is certain that the presence of *L. formicarum* was checked at all of the detectable Hungarian *L. neglectus* (super)colonies. By these negative results *L. formicarum* has remained recorded from Europe only from Madeira, Spain and France (Espadaler & Santamaria 2012) and we did not receive any new knowledge about the way of introduction of *L. neglectus* to Hungary. However, we still feel to be worth checking the infection of *L. neglectus* by *L. formicarum* in the case of all the known (Espadaler & Bernal 2015) and at all the yet to be discovered supercolonies.

**Table 1.** Number of examined *L. neglectus* workers (4706 in total) from the 37 different sample collecting points of the 21 (super)colonies. “Colony name 1-3” refers to large supercolonies where sampling was repeated from three different points (see Materials and Methods). As the exact locality at Tahi is not known (Tartally et al. 2004), collecting was not possible from there. See collecting points also on this map: <https://www.google.com/maps/d/viewer?mid=z-bSN3pfQhko.kGw46LqDaJdc>

Table 1.

Site	North	East	Number
Budapest, Árpád-bridge	47.532545°	19.064979°	42
Budapest, Belgrád Quey	47.497417°	19.047333°	40
Budapest, Budatétény 1	47.404844°	19.008338°	108
Budapest, Budatétény 2	47.400284°	19.006238°	98
Budapest, Budatétény 3	47.400197°	19.018056°	121
Budapest, Campus of Horticultural Science 1	47.481596°	19.040179°	113
Budapest, Campus of Horticultural Science 2	47.481391°	19.040387°	102
Budapest, Campus of Horticultural Science 3	47.481420°	19.040137°	122
Budapest, Castle 1	47.495379°	19.041177°	115
Budapest, Castle 2	47.494411°	19.041631°	104
Budapest, Castle 3	47.494580°	19.040882°	114
Budapest, Cement u. 1	47.524018°	19.221360°	259
Budapest, Cement u. 2	47.524196°	19.222237°	131
Budapest, Cement u. 3	47.524325°	19.222442°	178
Budapest, Dayka G. str.	47.481003°	19.011083°	279
Budapest, Galvani str.	47.455614°	19.041444°	0
Budapest, Lajos str. 1	47.526823°	19.037447°	97
Budapest, Lajos str. 2	47.526560°	19.037287°	111
Budapest, Lajos str. 3	47.526324°	19.037361°	98
Budapest, Orom str.	47.489973°	19.041471°	110
Budapest, Pázmány P. Promenade	47.469515°	19.063855°	146
Budapest, Pétervárad str.	47.518944°	19.108388°	114
Budapest, Szállás str.	47.475443°	19.130162°	114
Budapest, Tigris str.	47.492333°	19.031522°	3
Debrecen, Botanical garden 1	47.557216°	21.621882°	147
Debrecen, Botanical garden 2	47.557888°	21.621473°	179
Debrecen, Botanical garden 3	47.557983°	21.620572°	148
Debrecen, Csap str.	47.530431°	21.613693°	125
Ercsi 1	47.250398°	18.888689°	330
Ercsi 2	47.251144°	18.888550°	341
Ercsi 3	47.249706°	18.889525°	162
Érd 1	47.370167°	18.922934°	102
Pilisszentiván 1	47.606354°	18.905770°	119
Pilisszentiván 2	47.606275°	18.906167°	112
Pilisszentiván 3	47.606366°	18.905658°	107
Solymár	47.576982°	18.959131°	115
Tahi	?	?	0

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