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Plant communities with Rhynchospora fusca (L.) W. Aiton in Latvia

Rhynchospora fusca is found in central Europe, the southern part of Scandinavia, the Baltic States, and the northeastern part of America. It is a suboceanic boreo-temperate species. Not surprisingly, in Latvia, the species is restricted to the Coastal Lowland, more precisely to the north-western part of it. Four sites are known and there are no historical records from other sites.

The study aims to describe and classify plant communities with R. fusca and compare them with plant communities in other countries. Three sites were visited, and vegetation was described in ten sample plots. Formal definitions of fen alliances were used in classification at the alliance level and cluster analysis was used to classify vegetation at the association level.

Similarly, as in other parts of its distribution range R. fusca grows in a shallow nutrient-poor lake, fen, and periodically flooded humid dune slacks in Latvia. It forms monodominant stands in 10-15 cm water accompanied by Myrica gale, Carex lasiocarpa, and other sedges bordering Eleocharis multicaulis community. In the humid dune slacks, acidophilous species such as Andromeda polifolia, Vaccinium oxycoccos, Calluna vulgaris, Eriophorum vaginatum, and Eriophorum angustifolium are present. Rhynchospora fusca stands were less dense than in the lake, and they occupy the central part of dune slacks. Moss layer was absent or weakly developed. Sphagnum palustre and Sphagnum subsecundum were the most common bryophytes there. The dune slacks are overgrowing with Myrica gale.

In fen, R. fusca does not dominate. It is found in Rhynchospora alba community overgrowing with Myrica gale. Frequent associates were Carex lasiocarpa, Menyanthes trifoliata, Vaccinium oxycoccos, and Utricularia intermedia. Sphagnum teres, Sphagnum contortum, Campylium stellatum, and Scorpidium scorpioides are abundant in the moss layer.

The first results of classification and similarities with plant communities from other parts of Europe will be discussed.

Primary author: AUNINA, Liene (Institute of Biology of University of Latvia)

Presenter: AUNINA, Liene (Institute of Biology of University of Latvia)