

Chapter 3



**New host and country records of the
Dothistroma needle blight pathogens
from Europe and Asia**

ABSTRACT

Dothistroma needle blight (DNB) is a serious disease of pines (*Pinus* spp.) with a world-wide distribution. It is caused by the ascomycete fungi *Dothistroma septosporum* (teleomorph: *Mycosphaerella pini*) and *D. pini* (teleomorph unknown). Recently, DNB was found on *Pinus peuce* in Austria, *P. pallasiana* in Ukraine and the European part of South-Western Russia, as well as on *P. radiata* and *P. wallichiana* in Bhutan. Based on DNA sequence comparisons of the ITS and β -tubulin gene regions, isolates from Austria and Bhutan were identified as *D. septosporum*, while isolates from Ukraine and South-Western Russia were identified as *D. pini*. Additional isolates studied from *P. mugo* in Hungary confirmed the presence of *D. septosporum* in this country. The record of *D. septosporum* on exotic *P. peuce* in Austria represents a new host report of this needle blight pathogen in Europe. Likewise, DNB and the associated pathogen, *D. septosporum* are reported from Bhutan, Eastern Himalayas, for the first time. In addition, *D. pini* was found in two European countries and on a new host, *P. pallasiana*. These European records represent the only reports of *D. pini* from outside the North-Central U.S.A. Morphological examination of selected specimens from different hosts and countries showed that *D. septosporum* and *D. pini* overlap in the length of their conidia, while the width is slightly wider in *D. pini* than in *D. septosporum*. The differences in conidial width are so small, however, that identification of the two *Dothistroma* species solely based on morphology is virtually impossible. The new host and country records provided here are consistent with the continuing trend of reports of the DNB pathogens from new hosts and new geographic areas during the last two decades, particularly in the Northern Hemisphere.

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INTRODUCTION

Dothistroma needle blight (DNB), also known as red band needle blight, is a very serious needle disease of conifers. It primarily affects pine species (*Pinus* spp.), and only on occasion, other conifers with serious damage being restricted to pines. Needles of all ages are commonly affected by this disease, which can cause total defoliation and death of trees in severe cases (Gibson *et al.* 1964). Economic damage from DNB in forest plantations results mainly from severe growth losses (Gadgil 1984, Gibson 1972), while on shade and ornamental trees, a loss of the aesthetic value resulting from defoliation can be a problem.

Until recently, the cause of DNB was attributed to the ascomycete pathogen, *Dothistroma septosporum* (Dorog.) Morelet (teleomorph: *Mycosphaerella pini* Rostr.), with the name *D. pini* Hulbary, often used as a synonym. DNA sequence comparisons have, however, clearly shown that two phylogenetic species with very similar morphologies are responsible for DNB (Barnes *et al.* 2004). These two species have been designated *D. septosporum* (teleomorph: *M. pini*) and *D. pini* (teleomorph unknown), and it is now recognised that *D. pini* is not a synonym of *D. septosporum*. The two *Dothistroma* species show slight differences in the morphology and dimensions of their conidia, however, they are best distinguished on the basis of DNA sequence comparisons of nuclear gene regions (Barnes *et al.* 2004). Although various hypotheses regarding the area of origin of the DNB fungi have been presented (Evans 1984, Ivory 1990), their original, natural range is still not precisely known.

To date, *D. pini* has only been conclusively identified from exotic *P. nigra* J. F. Arnold in certain areas of the North-Central U.S.A. (Barnes *et al.* 2004). In contrast, *D. septosporum* is a widely distributed pathogen that has been spread to many parts of the world where pines are grown as non-natives in plantations. Initially, its notoriety was restricted to the epidemics it caused in plantations of exotic pine species, mainly *P. radiata* D. Don (Monterey pine), in the Southern Hemisphere (Ivory 1967, Gibson 1972). In the last two decades, however, there has been an increase in the incidence and severity of DNB in some parts of the Northern Hemisphere. Recent examples of serious epidemics of DNB include those on Corsican pine

(*P. nigra* subsp. *laricio*) in the U.K. (Brown *et al.* 2003) and France (Aumonier 2002), lodgepole pine (*P. contorta* var. *latifolia* Dougl. ex Loud.) in British Columbia (Woods 2003, Woods *et al.* 2005), and Austrian pine (*P. nigra*) in the Czech Republic (Jankovský *et al.* 2004) and Hungary (Koltay 2001). In recent years the disease has also been reported from a number of new hosts and from new geographic areas (Bradshaw 2004 & references therein, Bednářová *et al.* 2006). The concern in the Northern Hemisphere is that *D. septosporum* is not only causing economic losses on pines grown in intensively managed plantations, but also affects *Pinus* species in natural forests (Maschnig & Pehl 1994, Aumonier 2002, Brown *et al.* 2003, Woods 2003, Kehr *et al.* 2004, Woods *et al.* 2005, Kirisits & Cech 2006). With the increased awareness and importance of DNB, it has now been reported from over 70 different pine species and occasionally other conifers (Bednářová *et al.* 2006).

Between 2004 and 2006, DNB was found on several native and exotic pine species in various European countries and in Bhutan. The aim of this study was to conclusively identify the causal agents of the pine needle blight disease on *Pinus peuce* Griseb. (Macedonian or Balkan pine) in Austria, on *P. mugo* Turra (Dwarf mountain pine) in Hungary, on *P. pallasiana* D. Don (Crimean pine) in Ukraine and the European part of South-Western Russia, as well as on *P. radiata* and *P. wallichiana* A. B. Jacks. (Blue pine or Himalayan blue pine) in Bhutan. *Dothistroma* isolates from these five hosts, collected in these countries, were examined morphologically and compared using DNA sequence data.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Collection sites, specimen collection and fungal isolations

Specimens for laboratory study were collected during tree disease inspections of natural forests, forest plantations and ornamental trees in various European countries and in Bhutan. Samples consisted of needles from living trees showing symptoms and signs resembling those of DNB, collected in paper bags. Needle samples were placed at -70°C for a variable amount of time (2 hrs to 9 months) until processing.

In Austria, collections of needles were made in April 2004 from one, approx. 80 year-old, and four, approx. 25-30 year-old, exotic *P. peuce* trees growing at the forest experimental garden and arboretum 'Knödelhütte' of the Institute of Silviculture, University of Natural Resources and Applied Life Sciences, Vienna (BOKU) (Mayer 1983). Needle collections from five

approx. 10- to 20-year-old, exotic, *P. mugo* trees in the botanical garden of the University of West Hungary in Sopron, were conducted in August 2005. In November 2004, needles were collected from one, approx. 25- to 30-year-old tree amongst many infected *P. pallasiana* trees in a forest plantation outside the natural range of Crimean pine in the Tsjurupinsk area, Kherson region, Ukraine. In South-Western Russia, needles of exotic *P. pallasiana* were collected from forest plantations in two different areas within the Rostov region in 2006. The first collection, made in July, was from the Tarasovsky area, Gorodistchensky timber enterprise, Yefremovo-Stepanovskoye forestry, from an approx. 20-year-old tree. The second collection was made in October, from an approx. 28-year-old tree in the Kamensk area, Kamensk timber enterprise, Kamenskoye forestry, near Staraya Stanitsa village.

Collections in Bhutan were made during May and July 2005 at four different localities. One collection was obtained from Western Bhutan, from an approx. 10-year-old *P. radiata* tree planted as an introduced ornamental at the Renewable Natural Resources Research Centre (RNR-RC), Yusipang (Thimphu dzongkhag). The other collections were made in Central Bhutan, from native 5- to 20-year-old *P. wallichiana* trees growing in natural forests near Ura, near Tangsibi, and near Lamey Goemba (all located in Bumthang dzongkhag).

Fungal cultures were obtained from infected pine needles using the method described by Barnes *et al.* (2004). At localities where material from only one tree was collected (i.e. *P. pallasiana* in Ukraine and *P. radiata* at Yusipang, Bhutan), several isolations from different needles were made (Table 1). All isolates obtained in this study are maintained in the culture collection (CMW) of the Forestry and Agricultural Biotechnology Institute (FABI), University of Pretoria, South Africa (Table 1). Representative cultures and dried needles have also been deposited at the culture collection and herbarium of the Centraalbureau voor Schimmelcultures (CBS), Utrecht, The Netherlands and the herbarium of the V. N. Karasin National University (CWU), Kharkiv, Ukraine (Table 1).

Isolates of *D. septosporum* from Europe and of *D. pini* from the U.S.A., previously examined by Barnes *et al.* (2004) were included in the DNA sequence comparisons (Table 2). Likewise, one isolate of *Dothistroma rhabdoclinis* Butin, two isolates of *Mycosphaerella dearnessii* M. E. Barr and one isolate of *Neofusicoccum ribis* (Slippers, Crous & M.J. Wingf.) Crous, Slippers & A.J.L. Phillips were included in the DNA sequence comparisons (Table 2).

DNA extraction, sequencing and phylogenetic analyses

For unambiguous identification of *Dothistroma* isolates, DNA sequence analyses were conducted. Mycelium from 2- to 3-month-old cultures of *Dothistroma* spp. from Austria, Hungary, Ukraine, South-Western Russia and Bhutan was cut out from the malt extract agar medium (20 g/L malt extract, 10 g/L agar, Biolab, Midrand, South Africa) and placed into 1.5 ml Eppendorf tubes. The tubes were then freeze-dried and the mycelium further crushed into a fine powder using the Retsch GmbH MM301 mixer mill (Haan, Germany). DNA was extracted using the DNeasy Plant Mini Kit (Qiagen, Hilden, Germany). The Internal Transcribed Spacer (ITS) regions of the rDNA (using primers ITS1 and ITS4) and a portion of the β -tubulin gene region (using the primer pair Bt2a and Bt2b) were amplified and sequenced following the method described by Barnes *et al.* (2004).

Sequences obtained in this study were aligned on-line using MAFFT Version 5.8 (<http://align.bmr.kyushu-u.ac.jp/mafft/online/server/>) (Kato *et al.* 2005) with the L-INS-I strategy and the Gap opening penalty set at 1.53. Additional sequences obtained from GenBank (Table 2) were included for comparison in the phylogenetic analyses. Parsimony analyses on the alignments were performed using PAUP* Version 4.0b10 (Phylogenetic Analysis Using Parsimony) (Swofford 2002). The heuristic search option with 100 random stepwise-additions and tree bisection-reconnection (TBR) were selected. Gaps were treated as an additional state and the tree score frequency distribution was calculated using a histogram with 20 classes to evaluate random trees. *Neofusicoccum ribis* (Table 2) was used as the paraphyletic outgroup. Bootstrap confidence levels of the branching points were determined using 1000 replicates.

Morphology

For morphological characterisation, asexual fruiting structures (conidiomata) observed on the surface of needles from the respective host trees and countries were removed and mounted on glass slides containing lactic acid with cotton blue. The slides were examined with a Carl Zeiss (Carl Zeiss Ltd., Mannheim, Germany) light microscope using differential interference contrast. The lengths and widths of between 27 to 94 conidia, obtained from either one or two conidiomata from a single needle were measured electronically using a Zeiss Axio Vision (Carl Zeiss) camera system. Measurements were made for each of the collections from *P. peuce* in Austria, *P. mugo* in Hungary, *P. pallasiana* in Ukraine and South-Western Russia, as well as *P. radiata* and *P. wallichiana* in Bhutan. Where possible, conidia obtained from corresponding sporulating cultures were also measured, with sample sizes ranging from 45 to

56 conidia per culture. Conidial dimensions were subjected to statistical analyses using the program SPSS for Windows, version 12.0.1 (SPSS Inc., Chicago, IL, USA). Means of conidial length and width from needles and cultures were compared separately for each *Dothistroma* collection from the respective countries and hosts using independent-sample t-tests. Differences in the conidial dimensions between *Dothistroma* collections from different countries and hosts were tested by one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA), followed by the least significant difference (LSD) test. Separate analyses were done for measurements obtained from needles and from cultures. Differences in conidial length and width between *D. septosporum* and *D. pini* were analysed by independent-sample t-tests, using the pooled values from all needle collections and isolates measured, respectively. Comparisons between *D. septosporum* and *D. pini* were also done separately for conidial measurements obtained from needles and from cultures.

RESULTS

Symptoms and signs of needle blight

Incidence of DNB on all five host trees in the respective countries was high. Disease severity varied greatly and was not precisely evaluated, however, at least some individuals of each pine species in the various countries were severely infected. Typical symptoms and signs resembling those of DNB (Pehl & Wulf 2001, Brown *et al.* 2003, Barnes *et al.* 2004, Bradshaw 2004 & references therein, Kirisits & Cech 2006) were present on all needle collections from Austria, Hungary, Ukraine, South-Western Russia and Bhutan. However, symptoms and signs varied slightly on the different hosts. Unlike *P. mugo* and *P. radiata* where bright, brick-red bands occurred on infected needles, bands on needles of *P. peuce* were brownish and lacked the reddish colour that is in many situations typical for the disease. Necrotic bands on needles, necrotic needle tips or entirely necrotic needles of *P. peuce* had a rich, dark brown colour and hence appear to mask the red pigments produced by the toxin, dothistromin. The black and erumpent conidiomata were therefore observed in dark brown bands, or on necrotic parts of the needles devoid of bands.

Some of the *P. pallasiana* needles collected in Ukraine and South-Western Russia were brown and entirely necrotic, while others were green with only the distal parts of the needle being necrotic. Conidiomata were abundant and were distributed along the whole length of

the necrotic parts of the needles. They also occurred singly or in groups within distinct brick-red bands. Oozing masses of white conidia could be seen discharging from almost all of the conidiomata from the needles collected from Ukraine.

Symptoms and signs of DNB on *P. wallichiana* were relatively indistinctive, which was partly due to the presence of other needle pathogens, including *Lophodermium* spp. and a *Rhizosphaera* species. Necrotic needles of *P. wallichiana* were dark brown and conidiomata of *Dothistroma* were small (<300 µm) and difficult to observe with the unaided eye. Conidiomata were occasionally located in dark brown bands, but mostly in necrotic needle parts devoid of bands. Conidiomata occurred in sparsely distributed clusters, on distal parts, particularly at the tips of needles.

Fungal isolations

Using the method described by Barnes *et al.* (2004), isolations were made from the needle collections and they resulted in *Dothistroma* isolates for further morphological and DNA sequence comparisons (Table 1). Isolates either originated from different trees or from different needles from the same tree (Table 1). In total, four isolates were obtained from *P. peuce* in Austria, five from *P. mugo* in Hungary, three from *P. pallasiana* in Ukraine, two from *P. pallasiana* in South-Western Russia and three and nine from *P. radiata* and *P. wallichiana*, respectively, in Bhutan (Table 1). *Dothistroma* isolates were obtained from all four localities in Bhutan (Table 1). The majority of the isolates grew readily within 2 to 3 days and reached colony diameters of approximately 7 mm after three weeks of incubation at 18 °C. Isolates from *P. wallichiana* were the exception, however, as conidia only started germinating one to two weeks after being plated out and a further two weeks of growth was required, before colonies could be detected with the unaided eye.

DNA extraction, sequencing and phylogenetic analyses

The DNA product extracted using the DNeasy Plant Mini Kit was of high quality and void of PCR inhibiting ‘colourants’ usually present when using a basic phenol/chloroform extraction protocol for *Dothistroma* spp. Subsequent PCR amplifications were thus effective and produced bands of approximately 500 bp using the ITS, and 450 bp using the β-tubulin primers.

After alignments using MAFFT, 479 characters were obtained for the ITS sequence dataset, of which 117 were parsimony-uninformative and 75 parsimony-informative. For the β-tubulin

dataset, 418 total characters were obtained of which 31 were parsimony-uninformative and 212 parsimony-informative. Datasets were individually analysed and are presented in Figure 1.

All isolates from *P. peuce* in Austria, from *P. mugo* in Hungary and from *P. radiata* and *P. wallichiana* in Bhutan were identified as *D. septosporum* based on both their ITS and β -tubulin sequences (Figure 1). No variation between the isolates was observed in the ITS sequences. However, in the β -tubulin sequences, single base pair differences were found (Figure 1), which induced slight changes in the topology of the 4 most parsimonious trees obtained. Isolates CMW 23901 and CMW 23902 from Lamey Goemba (Bhutan) and isolates CMW 23895, CMW 23898 and CMW 23899 from Tangsibi (Bhutan) shared a common substitution from a G to an A, at position 84 in the aligned sequences. An isolate from Germany, CMW 13122, contained a single transversion of a C to a G at position 34. Isolate CMW 23428 from *P. nigra* in Austria, contained a substitution from a T to a C at position 337 and an insertion of a G at position 236 not observed in any of the other isolates from Europe, but found in strains from the Southern Hemisphere including New Zealand, South Africa, Chile and Australia (Barnes *et al.* 2004). No sequence differences were detected between isolates collected from the same tree.

The isolates from *P. pallasiana* in Ukraine and South-Western Russia were identified as *D. pini* based on both the ITS and the β -tubulin sequences (Figure 1). Slight variation between these isolates and other *D. pini* isolates from the U.S.A. were observed in the ITS sequence data (Figure 1). This was due to a base substitution in the European isolates at position 166 of the aligned sequences from an A to a G. No variation within the β -tubulin sequences was observed for *D. pini* (Figure 1).

Morphology

Examination of conidiomata obtained from needles and cultures from all the hosts examined, showed the presence of conidia that were morphologically similar to those of *Dothistroma* spp. Conidia were elongated, straight to slightly curved, hyaline and possessed between one and five septa. No teleomorph structures (pseudothecia) were seen on any of the needle collections.

Considerable differences in the lengths and widths of conidia measured from conidiomata on needles and of spores obtained in culture were observed (Table 3). In most cases the

differences between conidial dimensions on needles and in culture from the same collection were statistically significant (Table 3). There was no consistent trend, however, as to whether conidia were longer or wider on needles or in culture in all the *Dothistroma* collections examined. With regards to length, conidia of the *D. septosporum* collections from *P. peuce* in Austria and from *P. wallichiana* in Bhutan, were longer in culture than on needles, while the opposite was observed in the collections and corresponding isolates of *D. pini* from *P. pallasiana* in Ukraine and Russia (Table 3). With regards to the width, *D. septosporum* from *P. wallichiana* in Bhutan had wider conidia on needles than in culture, while no statistically significant differences were observed in the collection from *P. peuce* in Austria (Table 3). In all three *D. pini* collections and corresponding isolates from *P. pallasiana* in Ukraine and Russia, conidia measured from cultures were slightly wider than those measured from conidiomata on needles (Table 3).

There was substantial variation in the lengths and widths of conidia between *Dothistroma* species collected from different hosts in different countries, both for measurements taken from needles and from cultures (Table 3). For conidial length, there was no consistent trend whether conidia of *D. septosporum* or *D. pini* were longer. When comparing the measurements from needles, the *D. septosporum* collection from *P. peuce* in Austria had the smallest conidia (mean: 21.4 μm) of all *Dothistroma* specimens examined, followed by the *D. septosporum* collections from *P. wallichiana* and *P. radiata* in Bhutan, the three *D. pini* collections from *P. pallasiana* in Russia and Ukraine. The *D. septosporum* collection from *P. mugo* in Hungary had significantly longer conidia (mean: 29.6 μm) than all the other specimens (Table 3). When considering conidial length in culture, ranking of isolates was different, compared to the values from needles. Here, isolates of *D. pini* from Russia had the smallest conidia (means: 20.6 μm and 22.1 μm), followed by the *D. pini* isolate from Ukraine and the *D. septosporum* isolate from *P. wallichiana* in Bhutan (Table 3). The *D. septosporum* isolate from *P. peuce* in Austria had significantly longer conidia (mean: 28.1 μm) than the four other isolates, although it had the smallest conidia, when conidia were measured from needles (Table 3).

For conidial width, differences between *D. septosporum* isolates and *D. pini* isolates were more consistent, although not always statistically significant. On needles, all three *D. pini* isolates had slightly wider conidia (range of means: 3.1 to 3.5 μm) than the three *D. septosporum* isolates (range of means: 2.3 to 3.0 μm). However, the means of conidial width between the *D. pini* isolates from *P. pallasiana* in Ukraine and in the Tarasovsky area in

Russia were not statistically different to those of the *D. septosporum* isolate from *P. peuce* in Austria (Table 3). Moreover, in culture, all three *D. pini* isolates had wider conidia (range of means: 3.3 to 4.0 μm) than the two *D. septosporum* isolates measured (range of means: 2.3 to 3.0 μm), with statistically significant differences between these groups of isolates (Table 3).

Analyses of pooled data of *D. pini* and *D. septosporum*, from all collections and isolates, emphasized that there are no consistent differences in conidial length between the two *Dothistroma* species (Table 4). On needles, *D. pini* had significantly longer conidia than *D. septosporum*, while the opposite was observed for measurements in culture (Table 4). As indicated already in the comparisons of individual collections and isolates (Table 3), *D. pini* had significantly wider conidia than *D. septosporum*, in both measurements from needles and cultures (Table 4).

DISCUSSION

The results of this study provide interesting and important new host and country records of the DNB fungi from Europe and Asia. DNA sequence data for the rDNA ITS and β -tubulin genes verified that the isolates from Austria, Hungary and Bhutan represent *D. septosporum*. This fungus is, therefore, reported from a new host (*P. peuce*) in Europe, grown as an exotic in an arboretum in Vienna, Austria. Likewise, DNB and the associated pathogen, *D. septosporum* were found for the first time on an exotic (*P. radiata*) and a native host (*P. wallichiana*) in Bhutan. In addition, *Dothistroma* isolates from Hungary were identified for the first time using DNA-based diagnostic tools and confirmed to be *D. septosporum*. In contrast, isolates from Ukraine and South-Western Russia were identified as *D. pini*. This is, therefore, the first report of this fungus from outside the North-Central U.S.A. *Dothistroma pini* is now reported from a second continent (Europe) and its host range has been broadened to include not only *P. nigra*, but also *P. pallasiana*, in forest plantations outside its natural range.

The morphological studies have emphasized that conidial dimensions of the two *Dothistroma* species on pine are variable (Tables 3 and 4). Conidial dimensions differed considerably when compared *in vivo* and *in vitro*. This variation is likely influenced by many factors, including differences in host species and age, time of the year the collections were made and geographic

location. *Dothistroma septosporum* and *D. pini* do not show consistent differences in the length of their conidia (Tables 3 & 4). In contrast, *D. pini* has slightly wider conidia than *D. septosporum* (Tables 3 & 4), as previously reported by Barnes *et al.* (2004). Differences in conidial width between the two species were generally consistent for all examined specimens, although they were not statistically significant between all *D. pini* and *D. septosporum* collections when conidia obtained from conidiomata on needles were compared (Table 3). The differences in conidial width between *D. pini* and *D. septosporum* are, however, so small that this character is of very limited, if any, practical value for species diagnosis. We, therefore, contend that identification based on morphology alone is ambiguous and could in many cases lead to mis-identifications. DNA sequence comparisons remain the most reliable method to conclusively distinguish between the two *Dothistroma* species on pine. Thus, a re-examination of world-wide records of the causal agents of DNB using DNA-based techniques is required to obtain more precise distribution ranges for *D. septosporum* and *D. pini*. The present data suggest that *D. septosporum* is more widespread than *D. pini* (Barnes *et al.* 2004), but considering the similarity of the two species, and the new records of *D. pini* from Ukraine and South-Western Russia in the present study, future discoveries of *D. pini* are likely.

In Austria, DNB was recorded from *P. nigra* in the late 1950s (Petrač 1961) and this represents one of the earliest reports of the disease in Europe. Since then, DNB has been found on all pine species (*P. nigra*, *P. sylvestris* L., *P. mugo*, *P. uncinata* Mill. ex Mirb. and *P. cembra* L.) native in this country and it has become relatively common in recent years (Brandstetter & Cech 2003, Kirisits & Cech 2006). The discovery of *D. septosporum* infecting *P. peuce*, a non-native host in Austria, is not surprising considering its wide host range on pine and its common occurrence in Central European countries. This new host record is also consistent with other recent new host records from neighbouring Czech Republic (Bednářová *et al.* 2006) and with continuing new host records from other regions of the world (Bradshaw 2004 & references therein).

All five individuals of *P. peuce* in the experimental garden and arboretum 'Knödelhütte' in Vienna were suffering from DNB. In contrast, other pine species, including *P. nigra* and *P. ponderosa* Laws. (Douglas), which are considered to be very susceptible to the disease, were unaffected. Inspections in the experimental garden and arboretum in May 2007 revealed the presence of DNB on three other pine species, including *P. cembra* (Swiss stone pine), *P. jeffreyi* Grev. & Balf. (Jeffrey's pine) and *P. uncinata* (Mountain pine). However, disease

severity on the latter three hosts was much lower than on *P. peuce*. These observations on disease incidence and severity may thus indicate that *P. peuce* is highly susceptible to infection by *D. septosporum*, a suggestion that now needs to be confirmed in inoculation experiments. A few experimental plantations of *P. peuce* at high elevations in the Austrian Alps have been established, but during routine forest inventories in 2004 none of these stands were found to be affected by DNB (Lieseback M, personal communication).

Pinus peuce is a five-needled (white) pine that occupies a relatively small, natural distribution range on the Balkans, where it primarily occurs in mountain forests at high elevations (Schreiber 1928, Nedjalkov 1963, Alexandrov *et al.* 2004). Natural *P. peuce* forests fulfil important ecological and economic roles. This pine species has in former times also been proposed as a replacement for Eastern white pine (*Pinus strobus* L.) in Central European forestry (Schreiber 1928), due to its high levels of resistance to white pine blister rust, caused by *Cronartium ribicola* J. C. Fischer (Hoff *et al.* 1980). However, because of its slow growth it has not achieved any significance as a forest plantation tree outside its natural range and is presently only occasionally seen in botanical gardens and arboreta or as a shade and landscape tree. Based on the report of DNB on *P. peuce* provided here, the risk posed by *D. septosporum* to this pine species within and outside its native range will require further attention and study.

DNB was not recorded during surveys of conifer tree diseases in Bhutan in the 1980s (Donaubauer 1986, Donaubauer 1987) or in 2001 (Kirisits *et al.* 2002). Re-inspections of needle samples from *P. wallichiana* and *P. roxburghii* Sarg. collected by Donaubauer (1986, 1987), also failed to confirm the presence of *Dothistroma conidiomata*, but other needle pathogens (*Lophodermium* spp. and possibly *Meloderma desmazierii* [Duby] Darker) were present. Another survey of forest tree diseases conducted in Bhutan in July 2005 enabled the collection of needle samples that yielded the isolates identified as *D. septosporum* in the present investigation. This survey revealed numerous saplings and pole-sized trees of *P. wallichiana* affected by needle diseases in natural conifer forests at high elevations in Central Bhutan. In most cases, symptoms were not typical of DNB, and fruiting bodies of other ascomycete fungi were dominant on diseased needles. However, careful examination of collected specimens revealed the presence of tiny *Dothistroma conidiomata* on needles from many trees at various localities, shown here to belong to *D. septosporum*. From the observations made during the disease survey in 2005, it is reasonable to suggest that *D. septosporum* is the primary cause of needle blight on *P. wallichiana* in many areas in Bhutan.

Other ascomycetes, either endophytes or secondary colonists, however, were more obvious on needles affected by DNB and these most likely masked the symptoms caused by the primary causal agent. *Pinus wallichiana* is an extremely important tree species in temperate conifer forests in Bhutan, and monitoring the incidence and severity of DNB on this tree species over time is recommended in order to assess its potential to cause damage.

Besides its occurrence in Bhutan and adjacent areas including Nepal, India and Pakistan (Bakshi & Singh 1968, Reddy *et al.* 1975, Ivory 1990, Ivory 1994, Zakauallah *et al.* 1987), *D. septosporum* is widespread in other parts of Asia including China, Brunei Darussalam, Georgia, Japan, South and North Korea, the Philippines and Sri Lanka (Wang *et al.* 1998, [Data sheets on Quarantine pests: *Mycosphaerella dearnessi* <http://www.eppo.org/QUARANTINE/listA2.htm> and *Mycosphaerella pini*, http://www.eppo.org/QUARANTINE/documented_pests.htm]). In all cases the records were based on morphological characteristics and they, therefore, leave some doubt as to whether they all refer to *D. septosporum* or whether they could also represent the morphologically similar *D. pini*. Thus, identification of the isolates from Bhutan as *D. septosporum* represents the first confirmation using DNA-based diagnostic methods that DNB in an Asian country is actually caused by *D. septosporum* and not by *D. pini*.

Prior to this study, *D. pini* had only been known from the North-Central U.S.A. (Barnes *et al.* 2004). Its discovery in Ukraine and South-Western Russia is thus intriguing and has important consequences, as it represents the first report of *D. pini* from Europe. Its host range now includes the exotic *P. nigra* in North America and *P. pallasiana* in Europe. *Pinus pallasiana* is similar to *P. nigra* and is considered by some authors (Bobrov *et al.* 1974, Dobrochaeva *et al.* 1987) to be a variety or sub-species of *P. nigra*: *Pinus nigra* subsp. *pallasiana* (D. Don in Lamb.) Holmboë, *P. nigra* var. *pallasiana* Aschers. et Graebn. and *P. nigra* var. *pallasiana* (D. Don in Lamb.) C. K. Schneid. *Pinus nigra* and *P. pallasiana* are morphologically similar to each other, and it is, therefore, not surprising that *P. pallasiana* is a host of *D. pini*. Symptoms of DNB on *P. nigra* and *P. pallasiana* are also very similar, especially as characteristic brick-red bands are formed on the needles of both host species.

The natural range of *P. pallasiana* covers the Crimean peninsula in Ukraine, the Balkan peninsula, the Southern Carpathians, Cyprus, Crete, Anatolia and parts of the Black sea coast of Caucasus and Turkey (Bobrov *et al.* 1974, Dobrochaeva *et al.* 1987), while in the Northern and Central regions of Ukraine, artificial plantations of *P. sylvestris* prevail. Due to its

drought tolerance, *P. pallasiana* has been extensively used in afforestation programs in the steppes of Southern Ukraine and South-Western Russia, outside its natural range (Dobrochaeva *et al.* 1987, Gorbok & Deryuzhkin 1987). Since 2004, DNB has become an important problem in *P. pallasiana* forests in Ukraine and South-Western Russia. The disease was first found on this species in 2004 during routine inspections of forest plantations in the Kherson region (Vinogradov and Tsjurupinsk forests, Tsjurupinsk area). The severe epidemic at this site, originally suspected to be caused by *D. septosporum*, covered more than eight thousand hectares of forests (Usichenko & Kucherjavenko 2005). The isolates identified in our study as *D. pini* originated from this area and the epidemic there can thus be linked to this pathogen. DNB has subsequently been detected repeatedly in *P. pallasiana* plantations in the Mykolaiv and Odessa regions and in other forests in the Kherson region (herbarium samples CWU (Myc) 1228 and 1262-1265). Presently, DNB occurs throughout Southern Ukraine, and its severity appears to be increasing (Usichenko & Akulov 2005, Usichenko & Kucherjavenko 2005 [both recorded as *D. septosporum*]).

In South-Western Russia, the majority of the pine forests consist mainly of exotic plantations of *P. pallasiana* and *P. sylvestris*, although small natural fragments of *P. sylvestris* forests are present in the territory near to Voronezh and Lugan'sk (Ukraine) (Bobrov 1978). *Pinus pallasiana* was first introduced into the area as a highly drought tolerant species and its wide cultivation started only in the second half of the 20th century. Here, the main purpose of initiating pine plantations was to stabilize sandy soils along the Don and Donets rivers (Shaposhnikov & Kuznetsov 1960). DNB is noticeable on *P. pallasiana* in the Rostov and Volgograd regions and its distribution spans most of the areas along the basins of the Don and Donets rivers, as well as Belaya Kalitva and Chir rivers (Bulgakov 2007, Sokolova & Fomina 2007). Highest levels of disease incidence occur on sandy hills at low elevations and areas closest to the river where air humidity is higher. In conditions where trees are growing at low densities on wind-exposed slopes at higher elevations, or occur singly alongside roads, the disease is rarely observed. Younger trees (less than 30 years) are also more susceptible and in plantations, trees growing inside the stands are often more infected than those at the stand margin. Although not currently a threat, epidemics of DNB could have severe consequences for the protective function that *P. pallasiana* afforestions provide for the sandy soils against extensive wind and water erosion and possible dune movements.

We have ascertained that DNB in the *P. pallasiana* forests of Southern Ukraine and the Rostov region in South-Western Russia is caused by *D. pini*. The possibility exists, however,

that the other DNB pathogen is also present in these areas, because *D. septosporum* (as *Cytosporina septospora* Dorog.) was first described by Doroguine (1911) from *P. mugo* in Russia. Unfortunately, type material from the original description no longer exists and it thus cannot be re-examined. A second collection, made in the Kiev region of Ukraine in 1914 on *Pinus sylvestris* L. by L. Kaznowski, is maintained at the St. Petersburg herbarium. This material (LE 116244, herb. CBS 11381) was examined and, based on morphology only, was identified as *D. septosporum* (Barnes *et al.* 2004). This identification could not be verified with sequence data due to the age of the herbarium material, and it, therefore, remains ambiguous.

The discovery of *D. pini* in Southern Ukraine and South-Western Russia now raises doubts regarding the correct identity of the type specimen of *D. septosporum* and subsequent collections, making these countries intriguing regions for further studies on the DNB pathogens. Such studies could contribute substantially to the understanding of the taxonomy and origin of these fungi. Further collection and examination of *Dothistroma* isolates from *P. sylvestris* and *P. pallasiana* in the provinces of South-Western Russia and Southern Ukraine could clarify which DNB pathogens occur on the respective hosts in the different regions.

The discovery of *D. pini* on a native pine species in Europe also raises the question as to whether *D. pini* could have originated from Europe and was accidentally introduced into the U.S.A. This intriguing question could be addressed by comparing populations of *D. pini* from *P. pallasiana*, preferably collected within the natural range of this pine species, with populations from the U.S.A., using genetic markers. *Pinus pallasiana* infected with DNB within its natural range should also be examined for the occurrence of the teleomorph of *D. pini*, which has, thus-far, not been found.

The new host and country records provided here for *D. septosporum* and *D. pini* are consistent with the increasing number of reports of the DNB pathogens from new hosts and new geographic areas during the last two decades, particularly in the Northern Hemisphere. Some of these new records might be the result of an increase in awareness and diagnostic skills of forest pathologists and foresters. However, there are also reports from many parts of the world, often in places where the disease has been present for many years, that the incidence and severity of DNB is increasing. Accumulating evidence, therefore, suggests a real change in the DNB situation, which might be triggered by a combination of factors. These include favourable weather conditions during a number of consecutive years, planting

susceptible hosts over large areas (Woods 2003, Woods *et al.* 2005) and a build-up of inoculum over time. The fact that two closely related fungi cause DNB, and that one of them (*D. pini*) has now been found on a second continent, complicates the situation. It especially emphasizes the need for continuing surveys of *D. septosporum* and *D. pini* in pine forests and plantations of the world. The information generated from such surveys would facilitate strategies for disease management and quarantine measures.

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Table 1. Collection and isolation information as well as GenBank accession numbers of *Dothistroma* isolates examined in this study.

Locality	<i>Dothistroma</i> spp.	Host	Collectors	Culture no ¹	Additional culture and herbarium no.	Date collected	GenBank no.		Isolation information	
							ITS	BT2		
AUSTRIA										
Forest experimental garden, "Knödelhütte", Institute of Silviculture, BOKU, Vienna	<i>D. septosporum</i>	<i>Pinus peuce</i>	T. Kirisits, I. Barnes	CMW 23765	CBS 121010	April 2004	DQ926951	DQ926925	isolates made from different trees	
	<i>D. septosporum</i>	<i>P. peuce</i>	T. Kirisits, I. Barnes	CMW 23434		April 2004	DQ926952	DQ926926		
	<i>D. septosporum</i>	<i>P. peuce</i>	T. Kirisits, I. Barnes	CMW 23766		April 2004	DQ926953	DQ926927		
	<i>D. septosporum</i>	<i>P. peuce</i>	T. Kirisits, I. Barnes	CMW 23433		April 2004	DQ926954	DQ926928		
HUNGARY										
Botanical garden of the University of West Hungary, Sopron	<i>D. septosporum</i>	<i>P. mugo</i>	T. Kirisits, I. Barnes	CMW 23903		August 2005	DQ926956	DQ926931	isolates made from different trees	
	<i>D. septosporum</i>	<i>P. mugo</i>	T. Kirisits, I. Barnes	CMW 23435		August 2005	DQ926957	DQ926932		
	<i>D. septosporum</i>	<i>P. mugo</i>	T. Kirisits, I. Barnes	CMW 23906	CBS 121009	August 2005	DQ926960	DQ926935		
	<i>D. septosporum</i>	<i>P. mugo</i>	T. Kirisits, I. Barnes	CMW 23904		August 2005	DQ926958	DQ926933	same tree, different needles	
	<i>D. septosporum</i>	<i>P. mugo</i>	T. Kirisits, I. Barnes	CMW 23905		August 2005	DQ926959	DQ926934		
UKRAINE										
Tsjurupinsk area, Kherson region	<i>D. pini</i>	<i>P. pallasiana</i>	A. C. Usichenko	CMW 23767	CBS 121011, EX CWU (Myc) AS 1109	November 2004	DQ926964	DQ926939	same tree, different needles	
	<i>D. pini</i>	<i>P. pallasiana</i>	A. C. Usichenko	CMW 23768		November 2004	DQ926965	DQ926940		
	<i>D. pini</i>	<i>P. pallasiana</i>	A. C. Usichenko	CMW 23769		November 2004	DQ926966	DQ926941		
RUSSIA										
Kamensky area, Rostov region	<i>D. pini</i>	<i>P. pallasiana</i>	T. S. Bulgakov	CMW 24852	CBS 121005, EX CWU (Myc) AS 2086	October 2006	EF450254	EF450256		
Tarasovsky area, Rostov region	<i>D. pini</i>	<i>P. pallasiana</i>	T. S. Bulgakov	CMW 24853	EX CWU (Myc) AS 2088	July 2006	EF450255	EF450257		
BHUTAN										
Yusipang, Thimphu dzongkhag	<i>D. septosporum</i>	<i>P. radiata</i>	T. Kirisits, M. J. Wingfield, D. B. Chhetri, I. Barnes	CMW 23429	CBS 121006	July 2005	DQ926961	DQ926936	isolates made from same tree, different needles	
	<i>D. septosporum</i>	<i>P. radiata</i>	T. Kirisits, M. J. Wingfield, D. B. Chhetri, I. Barnes	CMW 23430		July 2005	DQ926962	DQ926937		
	<i>D. septosporum</i>	<i>P. radiata</i>	T. Kirisits, M. J. Wingfield, D. B. Chhetri, I. Barnes	CMW 23431		July 2005	DQ926963	DQ926938		
Ura, Bumthang dzongkhag Tangsibi, Bumthang dzongkhag	<i>D. septosporum</i>	<i>P. wallichiana</i>	H. Konrad, D. B. Chhetri, I. Barnes	CMW 23432	CBS 119535	May 2005	DQ926950	DQ926924	isolates made from different trees	
	<i>D. septosporum</i>	<i>P. wallichiana</i>	T. Kirisits, M. J. Wingfield, D. B. Chhetri, I. Barnes	CMW 23895		July 2005	DQ926944	DQ926918		
	<i>D. septosporum</i>	<i>P. wallichiana</i>	T. Kirisits, M. J. Wingfield, D. B. Chhetri, I. Barnes	CMW 23896		July 2005	DQ926945	DQ926919		
	<i>D. septosporum</i>	<i>P. wallichiana</i>	T. Kirisits, M. J. Wingfield, D. B. Chhetri, I. Barnes	CMW 23897		July 2005	DQ926946	DQ926920		
	<i>D. septosporum</i>	<i>P. wallichiana</i>	T. Kirisits, M. J. Wingfield, D. B. Chhetri, I. Barnes	CMW 23898	CBS 121007	July 2005	DQ926947	DQ926921		
	<i>D. septosporum</i>	<i>P. wallichiana</i>	T. Kirisits, M. J. Wingfield, D. B. Chhetri, I. Barnes	CMW 23899		July 2005	DQ926948	DQ926922		
	<i>D. septosporum</i>	<i>P. wallichiana</i>	T. Kirisits, M. J. Wingfield, D. B. Chhetri, I. Barnes	CMW 23900		July 2005	DQ926949	DQ926923		
	<i>D. septosporum</i>	<i>P. wallichiana</i>	T. Kirisits, N. Gyeltshen, I. Barnes	CMW 23901	CBS 121008	July 2005	DQ926942	DQ926916		same tree, different needles
	<i>D. septosporum</i>	<i>P. wallichiana</i>	T. Kirisits, N. Gyeltshen, I. Barnes	CMW 23902		July 2005	DQ926943	DQ926917		

¹ Abbreviations: CMW = Culture collection of the Forestry and Agricultural Biotechnology Institute (FABI), University of Pretoria, South Africa; CBS = Centraalbureau voor Schimmelcultures, Utrecht, The Netherlands; CWU = herbarium of the V. N. Karasin National University (CWU), Kharkiv, Ukraine.

Table 2. Additional isolates used in the phylogenetic analyses from which sequences were obtained from GenBank.

Fungus	Country	Host	Cultures ¹	Other culture no. ¹	GenBank Accession Numbers	
					ITS	B - tubulin 2
<i>D. septosporum</i>	Austria	<i>P. nigra</i>	CMW 23427	-	DQ926955	DQ926929
<i>D. septosporum</i>	Austria	<i>P. nigra</i>	CMW 23428	-	EF059972	DQ926930
<i>D. septosporum</i>	France	<i>P. coulteri</i>	CMW 9992	CBS 383.74	AY808290	AY808220
<i>D. septosporum</i>	Germany	<i>P. mugo</i>	CMW 13122	ATCC MYA604	AY808295	AY808225
<i>D. septosporum</i>	Poland	<i>P. nigra</i>	CMW 13004	-	AY808291	AY808221
<i>D. septosporum</i>	Slovakia	<i>P. sylvestris</i>	CMW 13123	ATCC MYA603	AY808294	AY808224
<i>D. pini</i>	U.S.A.	<i>P. nigra</i>	CMW 10951	-	AY808302	AY808232
<i>D. pini</i>	U.S.A.	<i>P. nigra</i>	CMW 14820	ATCC MYA-609	AY808304	AY808234
<i>D. pini</i>	U.S.A.	<i>P. nigra</i>	CMW 14821	ATCC MYA-606	AY808305	AY808235
<i>D. rhabdoclinis</i>	Germany	<i>Pseudotsuga menziessii</i>	CMW 12519	CBS 102195	AY808308	AY808239
<i>Mycosphaerella dearnessii</i>	China	<i>P. elliotii</i>	CMW 13119	ATCC 200602	AY808307	AY808238
<i>M. dearnessii</i>	France	<i>P. radiata</i>	CMW 9985	CBS 871.95	AY808306	AY808237
<i>Neofusicoccum ribis</i>	U.S.A.	<i>Ribes</i> sp.	CMW 7773	-	AY236936	AY236907

¹Abbreviations: CMW = Culture collection of the Forestry and Agricultural Biotechnology Institute (FABI), University of Pretoria, South Africa; ATCC = American Type Culture Collection, Virginia, U.S.A; CBS = Centraalbureau voor Schimmelcultures, Utrecht, The Netherlands.

Table 3. Lengths and widths (μm) of conidia of *Dothistroma* needle collections and corresponding isolates from conidiomata obtained from needles and from cultures on 2 % malt extract agar (MEA).

Origin of sample	Host	Dothistroma spp.	Substrate	N ¹	Conidial length (μm)				Conidial width (μm)			
					Mean ²	SD ³	Range ⁴	Sig. ⁵	Mean ²	SD ³	Range ⁴	Sig. ⁵
AUSTRIA, Vienna	<i>Pinus peuce</i>	<i>D. septospoum</i>	Needle	93	21.4 a	3.2	14.2-31.5	***	3.0 c	0.3	2.1-4.0	ns
			Culture (CMW 23766)	45	28.1 C	7.1	12.9-43.3		3.0 B	0.4	2.2-4.3	
HUNGARY, Sopron	<i>P. mugo</i>	<i>D. septosporum</i>	Needle	51	29.6 e	4.1	18.8-36.3	-	2.9 b	0.3	2.3-3.8	-
			Culture: no sporulation	-	-	-	-		-	-	-	
BHUTAN, Yusipang	<i>P. radiata</i>	<i>D. septosporum</i>	Needle	69	23.3 b	4.4	13.9-31.2	-	2.3 a	0.3	1.8-3.1	-
			Culture: no sporulation	-	-	-	-		-	-	-	
BHUTAN, Bumthang	<i>P. wallichiana</i>	<i>D. septosporum</i>	Needle	53	23.2 b	5.4	10.1-31.4	*	2.8 b	0.3	2.2-3.5	***
			Cultures (CMW 23432) (CMW 23898)	56	25.5 B	5.3	10.9-36.5		2.3 A	0.5	1.9-3.0	
UKRAINE, Tsjurupinsk area	<i>P. pallasiana</i>	<i>D. pini</i>	Needle	55	27.9 d	4.7	15.8-38.4	**	3.1 c	0.3	2.3-4.0	***
			Culture (CMW 23769)	53	25.0 B	3.8	16.3-35.6		3.3 C	0.3	2.6-4.1	
RUSSIA, Kamensk area	<i>P. pallasiana</i>	<i>D. pini</i>	Needle	51	26.6 cd	3.7	18.3-32.7	***	3.5 d	0.4	2.5-4.6	***
			Culture (24852)	51	20.6 A	3.1	15.3-27.8		3.9 D	0.4	3.0-4.6	
RUSSIA, Tarasovsky area	<i>P. pallasiana</i>	<i>D. pini</i>	Needle	27	25.3 c	3.8	15.9-31.2	***	3.1 c	0.2	2.9-3.7	***
			Culture (24853)	55	22.1 A	3.1	17.0-30.5		4.0 D	0.4	3.0-4.7	

¹ Number of conidia measured.

² Values (within columns) from substrate 'needle' followed by different lower case letters and those from substrate 'culture' followed by different capital letters were significantly different ($p \leq 0.05$) according to one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) followed by the LSD test.

³ Standard deviation.

⁴ Minimum-maximum.

⁵ Mean values of conidial length and width between substrates 'needle' and 'culture' of individual *Dothistroma* collections and isolates from different countries were compared using independent-samples t-tests (ns = not significant, * = significant at $p \leq 0.05$, ** = significant at $p \leq 0.01$, *** = significant at $p \leq 0.001$).

Table 4. Lengths and widths (μm) of conidia of *Dothistroma septosporum* and *Dothistroma pini* from conidiomata obtained from needles and from cultures on 2 % malt extract agar (MEA).

Substrate	Dothistroma spp.	N ¹	N ²	Conidial length (μm)				Conidial width (μm)			
				Mean	SD ³	Range ⁴	Sig. ⁵	Mean	SD ³	Range ⁴	Sig. ⁵
Needle	<i>D. septosporum</i>	4	266	23.8	5.1	10.1-36.3	***	2.8	0.4	1.8-4.0	***
	<i>D. pini</i>	3	133	26.9	4.2	15.7-38.4		3.2	0.4	2.3-4.6	
Culture	<i>D. septosporum</i>	2	101	26.6	6.2	10.9-43.3	***	2.7	0.5	1.9-4.3	***
	<i>D. pini</i>	3	159	22.6	3.8	15.3-35.6		3.7	0.5	2.6-4.7	

¹ Number of needle collections (for conidiomata taken from needles), or isolates (for conidiomata taken from cultures), from different countries examined (see also Table 3).

² Number of conidia measured.

³ Standard deviation.

⁴ Minimum-maximum.

⁵ Mean values of conidial length and width, within substrates “needle” and “culture”, were significantly different between *D. septosporum* and *D. pini* (independent-samples t-test, *** = significant at $p \leq 0.001$). Differences in conidial dimensions between substrates ‘needle’ and ‘culture’ within *D. septosporum* and *D. pini* were not analysed (but see Table 3 for comparisons of conidial dimensions on needles and in cultures of individual collections/isolates from different countries).

Figure 1. Phylogenetic trees derived from maximum parsimony analysis of β -tubulin and rDNA ITS sequence data. Isolates from Austria, Bhutan and Hungary all belong to *Dothistroma septosporum*, while isolates from Ukraine and South-Western Russia are clearly *Dothistroma pini*. Slight variation within isolates are found within *D. septosporum* in the β -tubulin tree and within *D. pini* in the ITS tree. Tree length and bootstrap values (in bold) are indicated on the branches.

β-tubulin 2
 CI = 0.924
 RI = 0.974
 Tree Length = 406
 g1 = -1.197

ITS1, 5.8S, ITS2
 CI = 0.958
 RI = 0.928
 Tree Length = 238
 g1 = -4.863

