The first record of *Victrix umovii* (Eversmann, 1846) (Lepidoptera: Noctuidae: Bryophilinae) in Belarus

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Abstract. *Victrix umovii* (Eversmann, 1846) (Lepidoptera: Noctuidae: Bryophilinae), found in the north and northwest of Vitebsk Region, is recorded for the fauna of Belarus for the first time. At the first locality (Braslav Lakes National Park), the species was collected using a light trap in an upland swamp in a Ledum-Sphagnum pine forest with Vaccinium uliginosum, surrounded by pine and spruce stands no more than 80 years old. In the second locality (Rossony District), one male was attracted to the light of a mercury vapor lamp in a clearing at the edge of a mossy pine forest, approximately 110 years old, adjacent to a site of bracken spruce forest, approximately 100 years old. The variability in the structure of the male genitalia is discussed: some specimens have a bifurcation at the apex of the cornutus to varying degrees; in the extreme case, the cornutus has the shape of two separate teeth.

Key words: Lepidoptera, Bryophilinae, *Victrix umovii*, first record, male genitalia, Belarusian Lakeland.

Первая находка *Victrix umovii* (Eversmann, 1846) (Lepidoptera: Noctuidae: Bryophilinae) в Беларуси

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Резюме. Впервые для фауны Беларуси указан *Victrix umovii* (Eversmann, 1846) (Lepidoptera: Noctuidae: Bryophilinae), обнаруженный на севере и северо-западе Витебской области. В первом местонахождении вид собран с помощью светоловушки на территории национального парка «Браславские озера» на верховом болоте в сосняке багульниково-сфагновом с голубикой, окруженном сосновыми и еловыми лесами и насаждениями возрастом не более 80 лет. Второе местонахождение находится в Россонском районе. Здесь один самец был привлечен на свет газоразрядной лампы на поляне у края сосняка мшистого возрастом около 110 лет, к которому примыкает участок ельника орлякового возрастом 100 лет. Приведены сведения об изменчивости в строении гениталий самца: некоторые экземпляры имеют в разной степени выраженное раздвоение на вершине корнутуса вплоть до двух практически отдельных зубцов.

Ключевые слова: Lepidoptera, Bryophilinae, *Victrix umovii*, первое указание, гениталии самцов, Белорусское Поозерье.

Introduction

To date, three species of noctuid moths from the subfamily Bryophilinae have been recorded for Belarus [Derzhinsky, 2018], inhabiting the southern and central parts of the country: *Cryphia fraudatricula* (Hübner, 1803), *Cryphia algae* (Fabricius, 1775) and *Bryophila raptricula* ([Denis et Schiffermüller], 1775). This list seemed incomplete and was expected to be expanded with further research. One such species, the discovery of which was expected, is *Victrix umovii* (Eversmann, 1846). First described from the forest-steppe zone of European Russia (Ulyanovsk), it was later found in Norway, Sweden, Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Moldova [Fibiger et al., 2009; Aarvik et al., 2017]. In Poland, it was recorded from the northeast of the country, Podlaskie Voivodeship, between 1961 and 1985; later records are unknown [Nowacki, Wąsala, 2016]. Probably the only known specimen in Ukraine was found in the vicinity of Kharkov at the end of the 19th century [Klyuchko et al., 2001]. In Russia, it is currently known from a number of regions of the European part and Siberia (according to the territorial division adopted in the Catalogue of Lepidoptera of Russia [Matov et al., 2019]): European southern taiga region, European central region, Middle Volga region, Volga-Don region, Middle Ural, South Ural, Middle Ob region, South-West Siberian region, Krasnoyarsk region, Altai Mountains region and Baikal region. It has also been recorded in western Mongolia [Volynkin et al., 2019].

Our studies of the Lepidoptera fauna conducted in 2022–2025 allowed us to detect *V. umovii* for the first time in Belarus, identify and describe its habitats, and obtain some data on its distribution and occurrence in the country.

Material and methods

The authors' own collections served as the material for this study. Moths were attracted at night to various artificial light sources (primarily DRL 250, DRV 250, and Osram HQL 250 mercury vapor lamps) using insect collection cloth. A Honda EU10i generator was used as the power source. Pennsylvania-type light traps with Philips Actinic BL 8W low-pressure mercury-vapor fluorescent lamps and ultraviolet LEDs powered by a converter from sealed 12-volt lead-acid batteries with capacities of 7 and 12 ampere-hours were also used. All materials are in the working

Research Article / Научная статья
DOI: https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.19339837

collection of the first author and will be transferred to the Zoological Institute of the Russian Academy of Sciences (St Petersburg, Russia) after the study is completed.

The male genitalia were dissected using the standard method [Robinson, 1976], stained with eosin in ethanol, and mounted with Euparal. Photographs of adults were taken using a Canon 90D digital camera with a Canon EF 100 mm f/2.8L Macro IS USM macro lens mounted on a tripod with a focusing macro rail. Photographs of genitalia were taken using a Magus Bio 250TL microscope with a Magus CHD40 digital camera. The original images of adults and genitalia were processed using Zerene Stacker 1.04 and Adobe Photoshop 2021.

The corticolous lichens from Polotsk, Rossony, and Gorodok districts mentioned in this paper were transferred for identification to Dr A.P. Yatsyna (Institute of Experimental Botany of the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus, Minsk, Belarus) and are stored in the lichen collection (MSK-L) of the Institute of Experimental Botany of the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus.

Victrix umovii (Eversmann, 1846)
(Figs 1–13)

Material. Belarus, Vitebsk Region: 1♂, Braslav District, 8.2 km NNW of Dubrovka vill., 55°25′42.38″N / 26°58′07.32″E, Ledum-Sphagnum pine forest with Vaccinium uliginosum, light trap, 25.06.2022 (Ye.A. Derzhinsky); 2♂, dissected genitalia No. DY0106, same locality, 13–14.06.2024 (Ye.V. Tatun, V.G. Limanovskaya); 3♂, same locality, 20–22.06.2025 (Ye.V. Tatun, V.G. Limanovskaya); 1♂, dissected genitalia No. DY0112 and DY0113, same locality, 1–2.07.2025 (Ye.V. Tatun, V.G. Limanovskaya); 1♂, dissected genitalia No. DY0110, Rossony District, 5.5 km S of Yukhovichi vill., 55°57′55.1″N / 28°38′56.9″E, clearing near the edge of a mossy pine forest with spruce, at light, 28.06.2025 (Ye.A. Derzhinsky).

Variability of the male genitalia. Among the published descriptions and illustrations of *V. umovii* male genitalia [Fibiger et al., 2009; Kononenko, 2016; Volynkin et al., 2019; Dvořák, Pekarsky, 2020; Koshkin, Pekarsky, 2020], there are no direct indications of variability in the cornutus shape. The species is characterized by the presence of a single "prominent, short, spine-like cornutus, free at tip, apically close to the vesica ejaculatorius" [Fibiger et al., 2009: 306] (Figs 3, 4). The only example of such variability can be found in a photograph of the genitalia of a male from Sol-Iletsk District, Orenburg Region of Russia, in which the cornutus is bifurcated at the apex [Pekarsky, 2023]. This deviation is not discussed in the paper. However, when examining genital preparations of seven males from Belarus, deviations from the typical cornutus shape were found in three of them. The most pronounced difference was in a specimen from the Rossony District (Figs 6, 7), in which the cornutus is divided into two distinct teeth. Unfortunately, the lack of other specimens from this population prevented us from determining the frequency of this deviation. Among the six males from the Braslav District, four had a typical cornutus shape. One had a slightly forked apex (Figs 9, 10), and another had a more pronounced fork (Figs 12, 13) and was most similar to that of the aforementioned specimen from Orenburg Region of Russia [Pekarsky, 2023]. Thus, it can be concluded that such variability is found in populations separated by significant distances. It is inherent to the species as a whole and is not a distinctive feature of populations from Belarus, where the typical cornutus shape also predominates. However, its presence needs to be taken into account in future studies.

Fig. 1. *Victrix umovii*, male, habitus (Braslav District, Belarus). Scale bar 10 mm.

Рис. 1. *Victrix umovii*, самец, внешний вид (Браславский район, Беларусь). Масштабная линейка 10 мм.

Habitat preferences and distribution in Belarus. Available literature sources do not provide a clear understanding of the habitat and food preferences of *V. umovii*. In Estonia, the species was first found in 1967 in a dry pine forest, then, in 1971–1972, in a mixed forest dominated by conifers with an understory of young spruce trees, on sandy but moist soil; the trunks and branches of trees growing there are densely covered with lichen [Skvortsov, Thomson, 1973]. In Sweden, *V. umovii* was found primarily in old spruce forests, preferring dry, well-drained soils, and occasionally in pine forests, including in rocky ones. However, some habitats are located on or near moist soils. In its habitats, pendant lichens of the family Parmeliaceae are usually numerous: Usnea spp., Alectoria sarmentosa, Bryoria capillaris and Platismatia glauca [Hydén, 1993; Ahola, Silvonen, 2005; Fibiger et al., 2009]. From these descriptions, it is not entirely clear what age forests are called old. However, in another work by one of those authors, devoted to the distribution and biology of another noctuid moth in Sweden, *Xestia sincera* (Herrich-Schäffer, [1851]), where *V. umovii* is also mentioned, the discussion concerns spruce forests aged 120–160 years [Hydén, Sjökvist, 1993]. Trophic relations of larvae in nature are unknown. They are thought to feed on lichens, like other species of the subfamily Bryophilinae. Under laboratory conditions, larvae hatched from eggs obtained from wild-caught females, which were offered the lichens Bryoria capillaris, Alectoria sarmentosa, Platismatia glauca, and Hypogymnia physodes, along with the mosses Pleurozium schreberi and Hylocomium splendens, feed only on Alectoria sarmentosa [Hydén, 1993].

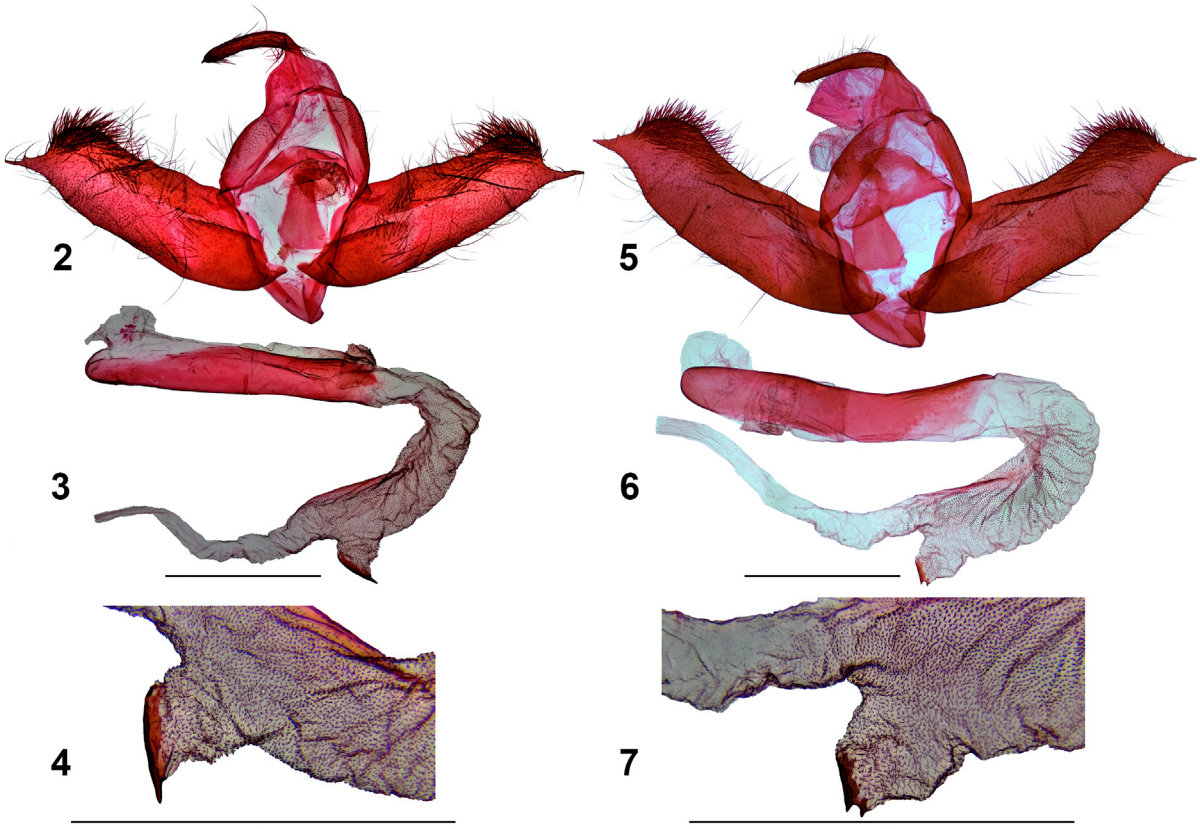
Victrix umovii was first collected in Belarus on June 25, 2022, in Braslavsk Lakes National Park. This discovery was quite unexpected, as, based on literature on the species' habitats in Northern Europe, it was most likely to be found in old spruce forests with abundant pendant lichens Bryoria spp. and Usnea spp. (Parmeliaceae). The specimen was collected in a light trap which was set up in an upland swamp within a Ledum-Sphagnum pine forest with Vaccinium uliginosum, which, according

to forest management data, is 60 years old (Fig. 14). The bog extends approximately 500 m from north to south and approximately 850 m from west to east. To the north and northwest of it a section of artificial Oxalis-Picea forest lies. It is approximately 45 years old, although along the edge of the bog there are individual, noticeably larger, spruce trees that are obviously older. The trap was located approximately 130 m from the edge of the bog. To the south, the bog is adjoined by a natural Vaccinium myrtillus – Pinus forest, 80–85 years old. To the east of the bog is an area of natural Vaccinium myrtillus – Picea forest 65–80 years old. To the west, the bog is bounded by a narrow strip of Oxalis-Betula forest with aspen, black alder, spruce, and maple. Therefore, there are no coniferous forests older than 80–85 years near this locality of *V. umovii*. During the examination of the above-mentioned forest areas around the bog, the following species of lichens from the family Parmeliaceae were registered: Evernia prunastri, Hypogymnia physodes, Platismatia glauca, Pseudevernia furfuracea, Ramalina farinacea. At the same time, Bryoria and Usnea species were not found. In the pine forest in the upland swamp, where traps were set on the trunks and branches of pine trees, the following pendant lichens were found: Evernia prunastri, Usnea barbata, Platismatia glauca, Hypogymnia sp.

Despite the fact that the light trap was operated at this location for 10 nights from June 22 to July 1, 2022, and on June 25 at the edge of the bog, approximately 140 m away, and a cloth with a 250-watt lamp was additionally installed, only one specimen, a male, was caught in 2022. In 2023, no light collections were conducted at this location. In 2024, from June 13 to July 18, two light traps were installed. The first was in the same location as in 2022, the second – approximately 250 m to the northwest, at the edge of the Oxalis-Picea forest. Two more *V. umovii* males were collected in the first trap on June 13–14, and none were collected in the second trap during the entire period of its operation.

In 2025, three light traps were set up between June 16 and July 13. The first was in the same location as in 2022, the second was 150 m northwest of it, at the edge of an Oxalis-Picea forest, and the third was 500 m south of the first, in a Vaccinium myrtillus – Pinus forest. Four *V. umovii* males were collected in the first trap from June 20 to July 2, while none in the others during their entire operation.

In 2025, we attempted to find new habitats of *V. umovii* in Belarus. Based on published data on the species' distribution, preferred habitats, and hypothesized trophic relationships, we hypothesized that it would be most likely to be found in old spruce forests with abundant

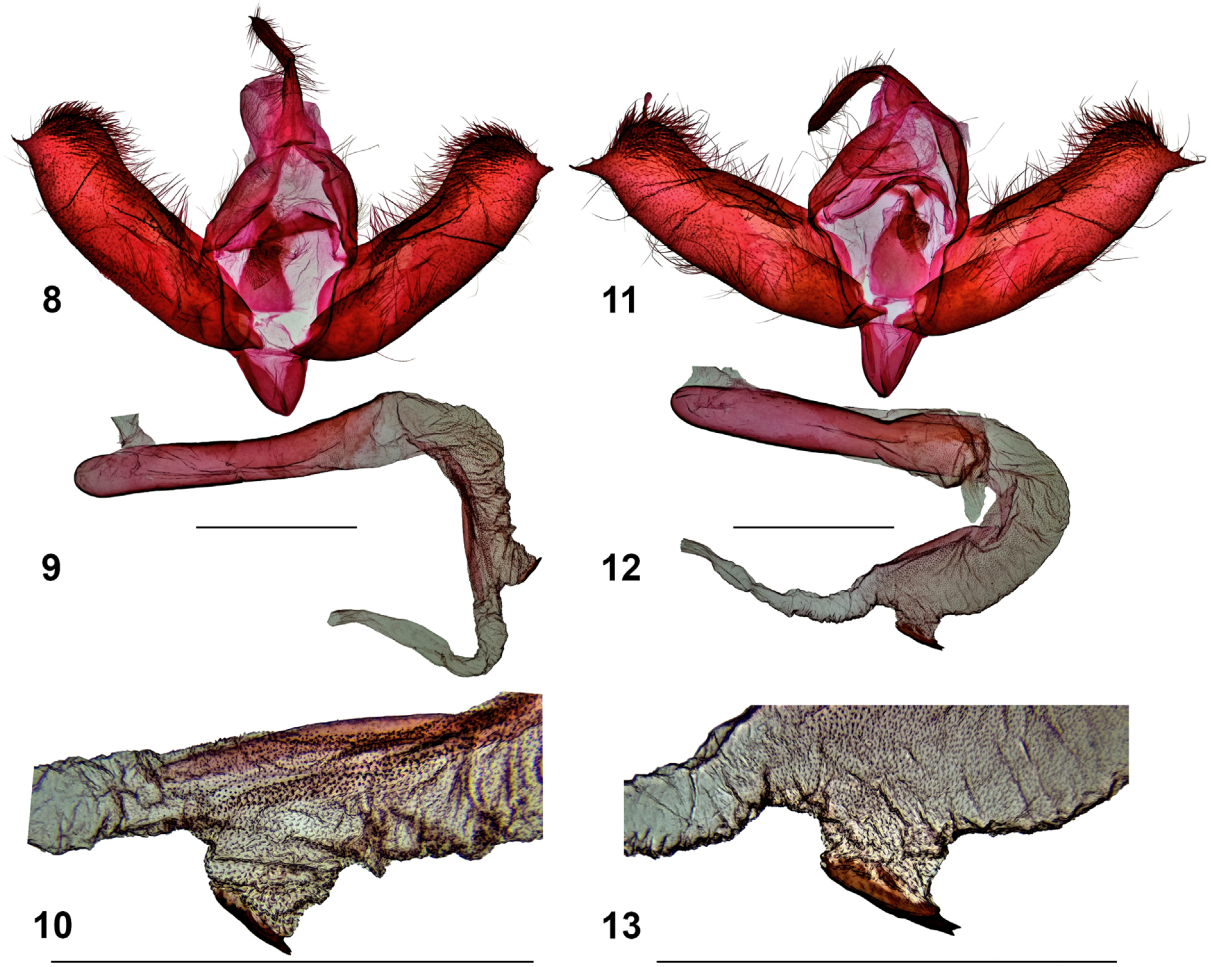


Figs 2–7. Male genitalia of *V. umovii*.

2–4 – specimen from Braslav District (slide No. DY0106); 5–7 – specimen from Rossony District (slide No. DY0110). 2, 5 – armature; 3, 6 – aedeagus with everted vesica; 4, 7 – cornutus. Scale bars 1 mm.

Рис. 2–7. Гениталии самцов *V. umovii*.

2–4 – экземпляр из Браславского района (препарат № DY0106); 5–7 – экземпляр из Россонского района (препарат № DY0110). 2, 5 – вооружение; 3, 6 – эдеагус с вывернутой везикой; 4, 7 – корнутус. Масштабные линейки 1 мм.



Figs 8–13. Male genitalia of *V. umovii*.
8–10 – specimen from Braslav District (slide No. DY0112); 11–13 – specimen from Braslav District (slide No. DY0113). 8, 11 – armature; 9, 12 – aedeagus with everted vesica; 10, 13 – cornutus. Scale bars 1 mm.
Рис. 8–13. Гениталии самцов *V. umovii*.
8–10 – экземпляр из Браславского района (препарат № DY0112); 8, 11 – вооружение; 9, 12 – эдеагус с вывернутой везикой; 10, 13 – корнутус. Масштабные линейки 1 мм.

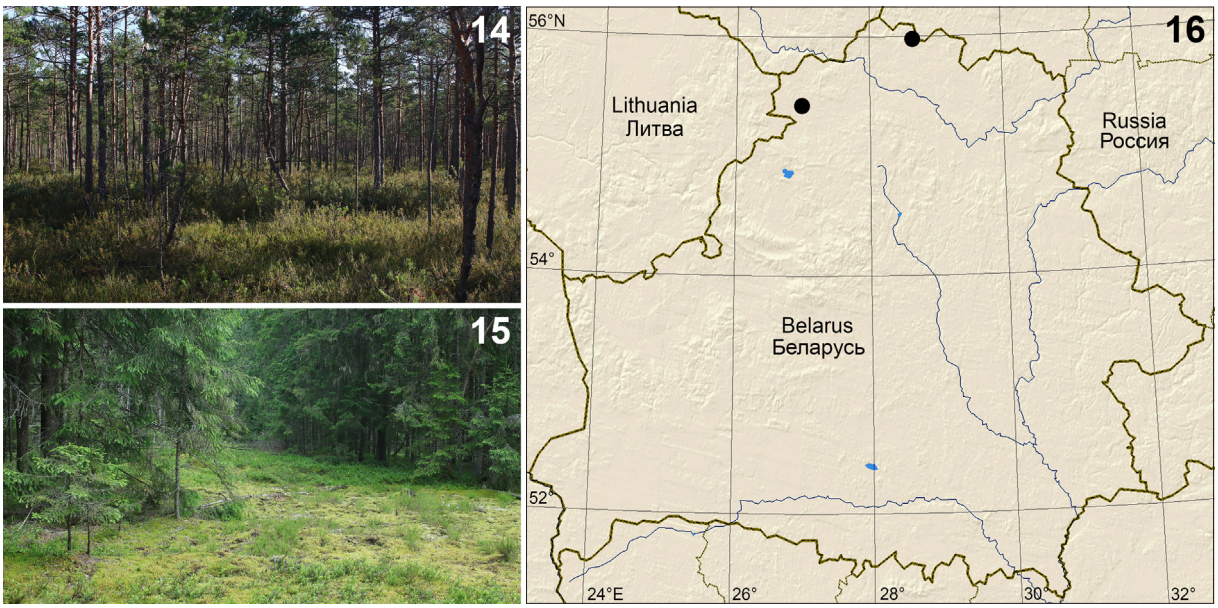
pendant lichens in the north of Vitebsk Region. The sites most suitable for these criteria were selected in Gorodok, Polotsk, and Rossony districts. In Gorodok District, a 90-year-old Oxalis-Picea forest, located 8 km east of Bychikha Station, near Niogro Lake was surveyed. Three light traps were set up there on June 13–15 and July 1–3. Additionally, a cloth was installed in an adjacent 65-year-old Oxalis-Picea forest on June 13 and July 3. On the branches of spruce trees near the installation sites of traps and a cloth, pendant lichens Usnea dasypoga and Bryoria nadvornikiana were abundant. In Polotsk District, a 120-year-old Oxalis-Picea forest 7 km south-southeast of Polotsk was examined. Pendant lichens Usnea dasypoga and Bryoria nadvornikiana were also common on spruce branches there. One light trap was installed in this area from June 27 to 29 and July 10. Also on June 29 and July 10, collection by light using a cloth was carried out here. Another light trap was placed on these two nights in an adjacent area of a 105-year-old Vaccinium myrtillus – Picea forest. In addition, several more areas of spruce and pine forests in Gorodok and Polotsk districts were surveyed using light traps from mid-June to mid-July.

Several sites were surveyed in the Rossony District. The first, located 2 km south of Yukhovichi village, consisted of a 95-year-old Oxalis-Picea forest with birch, pine, and aspen, covering a total area of 17.2 hectares. Two light traps were set up here on June 27–28 and July 11–12. The remaining sites were located 5–6 km south of Yukhovichi village, where the target species was discovered. A single *V. umovii* male was attracted on June 28 to a cloth with an Osram HQL 250 mercury vapor lamp, set up in a clearing at the edge of an approximately 110-year-old mossy pine forest with spruce and birch undergrowth (Fig. 15), adjacent to a 100-year-old, largely cleared, bracken spruce forest. In both the pine and spruce forests, the pendant lichens Usnea dasypoga and Bryoria nadvornikiana were found on spruce branches, especially numerous on the spruce undergrowth surrounding the clearing. Other lichen species from the family Parmeliaceae were also presented on the spruce branches here: Hypogymnia physodes,

Platismatia glauca, Tuckermanopsis chlorophylla. In light traps, one of which was set up in the same pine forest and the other 600 meters to the south, in a Vaccinium myrtillus – Betula forest with some spruce, where Bryoria nadvornikiana was also abundant on the spruce branches, no any *V. umovii* specimens were caught either that night or the previous night. Despite it was recorded that *V. umovii* moths are attracted to light only on the warmest nights [Ahola, Silvonen, 2005], the night of June 28 was clear and quite cold, and the moth arrived at the cloth at 0:40 a.m. at an air temperature of +10 °C. On the previous night, June 27, the cloth was set up several dozen meters from the above-mentioned location, at the edge of a clearing in a bracken spruce forest. The night was cloudy, with light rain starting around 10 p.m. The air temperature was 14–15 °C, dropping to 13 °C by 3 a.m. The moon was waxing during these days (between new moon and first quarter) and had no noticeable effect on flight. This site was re-examined on July 11–12, 2025. The first night was clear, with a shower occurring around 7 p.m. The second night was cloudy. Since the full moon fell on July 10, the night was bright, significantly reducing insects attracted to light. The cloth was installed in the same location where *V. umovii* had previously been captured. In addition, three light traps were placed at the edge of the aforementioned clearing in a bracken spruce forest, in a mossy pine forest, and in a bilberry birch forest. Both nights were relatively warm: the temperature by 2 a.m. was +14... +15 °C. But not a single *V. umovii* specimen was caught this time.

It should also be noted that from mid-June to the end of July 2025, we also collected insects in coniferous forests of Vitebsk, Orsha, Senno, and Ushachi districts of Vitebsk Region with light traps. In 2022–2023, we also conducted regular light trap collections in coniferous forests of Vitebsk District. At the end of June 2023, a spruce and pine forest areas at the mouth of the Biklozha River in Beshenkovichi District of Vitebsk Region were also surveyed using light traps. In 2023–2024, regular collections were conducted in various biotopes of the Koz'yansky Landscape Reserve in the Shumilino District of Vitebsk Region, including pine forests in the large upland swamp Obol-2 and spruce forests in its vicinity. *Victrix umovii* was not found in any of these locations.

It cannot be ruled out that a combination of unfavorable weather conditions in June 2025 prevented us from finding *V. umovii* in some of the locations surveyed. Therefore, it would be desirable to re-examine them in the coming years. The literature notes indicating that adults may be found in the wild not every year, but only in even or odd years [Hydén, 1993; Ahola, Silvonen, 2005; Fibiger et al., 2009; Kononenko, 2016], are not confirmed by observations in Belarus. In Braslav District *V. umovii* was found in both 2024 and 2025. However, the possibility of fluctuations in abundance from year to year cannot be ignored. The search for new habitats is hampered by the lack of precise data on the food preferences of the larvae. Available literature data on the exclusive larvae feeding on Alectoria sarmentosa in laboratory conditions [Hydén, 1993] are not applicable here, since this lichen is not found in Belarus [Yatsyna et al., 2019]. Therefore, even if *V. umovii* larvae can feed on it within its range, they must obviously use other food sources in Belarus. These may include other lichens from related genera of the Parmeliaceae family. The data on the species' preference for old forests also cannot be considered as confirmed in Belarus. On the one hand, the age of the forests near the location in Braslav District,



Figs 14–16. Biotopes and collecting localities of *V. umovii* in Belarus.

14 – Ledum-Sphagnum pine forest with Vaccinium uliginosum (Braslav District, 8.2 km NNW of Dubrovka village); 15 – clearing near the edge of a mossy pine forest with spruce (Rossony District, 5.5 km S of Yukhovichi village); 16 – localities of *V. umovii* in Belarus.

Рис. 14–16. Биотопы и пункты сборов *V. umovii* в Беларуси.

14 – сосняк багульниково-сфагновый с голубикой (Браславский район, 8.2 км ССЗ д. Дубровки); 15 – поляна в сосняке мшистом с елью (Россонский район, 5.5 км Ю д. Юховичи); 16 – местонахождения *V. umovii* в Беларуси.

where most specimens were collected, does not exceed 80–85 years. The only specimen from Rossony District was indeed collected in an older forest, 100–110 years old. On the other hand, it was not found in a number of 90- to 120-year-old spruce forests, which most closely matched our initial understanding of the species' biotope. Note that old-growth forest sites are difficult to find in Belarus. Only one of the sites we found was 120 years old; all the others were younger. It is possible that older spruce forest sites have survived in hard-to-reach places, including protected natural areas. A thorough search for such sites could form the basis for further study of *V. umovii* and some other Lepidoptera species associated with old spruce forests in Belarus.

The above data convincingly demonstrate the rarity and local distribution of *V. umovii* in Belarus, despite its broad range (Fig. 16). Its inclusion in the appendix to the fifth edition of the Red Data Book of the Republic of Belarus as a species requiring additional study and attention for preventive conservation, is justified [Krasnaya kniga..., 2025].

Acknowledgements

The authors thank Dr A.P. Yatsyna (Institute of Experimental Botany of the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus, Minsk, Belarus) for assistance in identifying lichens and Mr. A.Yu. Skrebniow (Vitebsk, Belarus) for reviewing and editing the manuscript in English. The first author also thanks Dr I.A. Solodovnikov (Vitebsk, Belarus) for support during joint fieldwork and Dr A.Yu. Matov (Zoological Institute of the Russian Academy of Sciences, St Petersburg, Russia) for assistance with literature searches.

The work of Ye.A. Derzhinsky was supported by a grant from the President of the Republic of Belarus in the field of science for 2025.

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Received / Поступила: 20.12.2025
Accepted / Принята: 20.01.2026
Published online / Опубликована онлайн: 31.03.2026