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## Two new *Ophiostoma* species from *Protea caffra* in Zambia

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The genus *Ophiostoma* (*Ophiostomatales*) has a global distribution and species are best known for their association with bark beetles (*Curculionidae: Scolytinae*) on conifers. An unusual assemblage of these fungi is closely associated with the African endemic plant genus *Protea* (*Proteaceae*). *Protea*-associated *Ophiostoma* species are ecologically atypical as they colonise the fruiting structures of various serotinous *Protea* species. Seven species have been described from this niche in South Africa. It has been speculated that novel species may be present in other African countries where these host plants also occur. This view was corroborated by recent collections of two unknown species from *Protea caffra* trees in Zambia. In the present study we evaluate the species delineation of these isolates using morphological comparisons with other *Protea*-associated species, differential growth studies and analyses of DNA sequence data for the  $\beta$ -tubulin and internal transcribed spacer (ITS1, 5.8S, ITS2) regions. As a result, the species *O. protea-sedis* sp. nov., and *O. zambiensis* sp. nov. are described here as new. This study brings the number of *Protea*-associated *Ophiostoma* species to nine and highlights the need for more inclusive surveys, including additional African countries and hosts, to elucidate species diversity in this uncharacteristic niche.

**Keywords:** ITS; OPHIOSTOMA; PHYLOGENY; PROTEA; TAXONOMY;  $\beta$ -TUBULIN

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