COMMON LICHENS OF NORTHEASTERN NORTH AMERICA
A FIELD GUIDE

Troy McMullin and Frances Anderson

ILLUSTRATIONS BY Judith Pennanen
PHOTOGRAPHY BY Catherine Pross and Troy McMullin

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FOR MOST PEOPLE, LEARNING ABOUT lichens has not been easy, until recently. Historically, the only guides available to identify lichens had black and white photographs, which were often fuzzy or too distant to be instructive, or they had line drawings. Most lichen literature was written for professional lichenologists, using what amounts to another language to describe the lichens and requiring a microscope and a number of chemicals to identify the specimens.

The publication of Lichens of North America by Irwin Brodo, Sylvia Sharnoff and Steve Sharnoff in 2001 opened the world of lichens to everyone. It was the first full-color guide to lichens on the continent, useful to amateur naturalists and professional lichenologists alike. At nearly 4 kg (8.5 pounds), it is a comprehensive volume made for the lab or coffee table, not for lugging around in a backpack. Its beauty and readable text has created a new thirst for a portable and easy-to-use field guide, such as this one.

Common Lichens of Northeastern North America is designed for amateur naturalists, nature interpreters, forestry workers, land surveyors, researchers and the general public. Meant to fit in a pocket or backpack, it requires no previous experience using dichotomous keys, no use of chemicals, and no microscopic examinations in a lab, though a hand lens is essential. Most of the 138 species covered in detail in this book are identifiable to species or at least to genus in the field. Each is shown in a full-color photograph, accompanied by a drawing of the details that help with identification.

To make this guide easy to use, we have arranged the lichens as they are encountered in the field, according to the surface they live on: trees,
rocks and soil, then by shape or growth form. If they are leafy they are foliose; if they stand up like little trees or dangle from a branch they are fruticose; and if they are a smear of color on a surface, often with tiny dots, they are crustose. Then, they are grouped by color. Though colors are subjective to individuals, we used generalized color groups that should include any variations. Within color groups, there are further divisions, according to the distinctive features of each species.

Technical terms are explained in the Glossary. There’s no escaping the need to learn a few terms that describe lichen features. We have tried to keep these to a minimum, and have designed a template for each lichen that reinforces the same terms. When a lichen doesn’t have a particular feature, the template will tell you so. Where possible, we have described the Greek (G.) and Latin (L.) origins of the species’ names.

This is not a comprehensive guide to all lichens in the Northeast and Canadian Maritimes, where there are several hundred species, maybe more. After consulting with regional lichenologists we selected field-identifiable common species that occur in the Maritimes. Most also occur in Newfoundland, Québec, Ontario and much of New England. To the careful observer they should be identifiable in the field using only a hand lens. We also chose to highlight some lichens which are either at risk or considered rare, so that collectors will be cautious about collecting these lichens or otherwise damaging their habitats.

We encourage anyone with an interest in lichens to use our guide as a starting point. Lichens of North America and Macrolichens of New England and other references (see Further Reading, p. 167) will provide additional details on a greater number of lichens for those who want to study them in earnest.

2 INTRODUCTION
**LICHEN:** *Punctelia rudecta*

**COMMON NAME:** Rough speckled shield lichen

**NAME ORIGINS:** Punctelia (L.) = dotted, referring to the speckles (pseudocyphellae) on the upper surface; rudecta (L.) = rough, likely referring to combined appearance of the isidia and pseudocyphellae

**FOUND:** On most tree types; occasionally on wood

**COLOR:** Green-gray, often looking bleached out except for the outer thallus edges; lower surface pale to light brown, occasionally with orange patches

**SHAPE/SIZE:** Lobes ≤ 8 mm, adhering closely to the substrate; upper surface covered with conspicuous white speckles (pseudocyphellae), especially toward the lobe tips

**ISIDIA:** Common; cylindrical, occasionally branched; dense toward the center, sparse toward the lobe edges

**SOREDIA:** None

**APOTHECIA:** Uncommon; brown

**RHIZINES:** Common; light brown, straight (simple); throughout the lower surface

**DISTINCTIVE FEATURES:** Green-gray, isidiate thallus covered with white speckles; pale-brown lower surface

**NOTES:** *Cetrelia* (p. 28) species can appear similar. They also have conspicuous white speckles, but the lobes are larger (≤ 20 mm), often more ruffled and they have soredia not isidia. Their lower surface is dark brown to black.
**Lichen:** *Imshaugia aleurites*

**Common Name:** Salted starburst lichen

**Name Origins:** *Imshaugia* = after American lichenologist Henry Imshaug (1925–2010); *aleurites* (G.) = flour-like, likely referring to the color of the thallus

**Found:** On bark and wood of conifers, usually in the open

**Color:** Shiny, whitish gray above; white with tan areas below

**Shape/Size:** Round to oval-shaped thallus, with flat, strap-shaped, 0.5–1.5 mm wide lobes radiating from the center; ≤ 5 cm across, growing closely attached to the substrate

**Isidia:** Abundant on the surface, except at the ends of the lobes; the unbranched isidia are usually brownish at the tips

**Soredia:** None

**Apothecia:** Rare

**Rhizines:** Pale brown, abundant

**Distinctive Features:** Shiny, flat, gray-white lobes and brown-tipped isidia

**Notes:** In humid, sheltered habitats, *Imshaugia aleurites* can drape itself off the branch it grows on, becoming almost pendent. Normally it adheres closely to its substrate.