



# Syntaxonomic diversity of the spruce and birch-spruce open woodlands (Vaccinio–Piceetea) at the northern boundary of their range in the Nenets Autonomous Area (Russia)

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Manuscript received: 25.12.2025  
Review completed: 28.02.2026  
Accepted for publication: 01.03.2026  
Published online: 06.03.2026

## ABSTRACT

The communities of *Picea obovata* with *Betula pubescens* var. *pumila* described in the taiga–tundra ecotone of the northeastern European Russia are assigned to two alliances: Empetro hermaphroditi–Piceion obovatae Morozova 2025, previously described for sparse spruce and birch–spruce forests of the northern taiga zone forming on watershed plateau under low-temperature conditions, and Aconito rubicundi–Abietion sibiricae Anekhonov et Chytrý 1998 (suballiance Clematido sibiricae–Piceenion obovatae Zaugolnova in Morozova 2025), which unites spruce forests and woodlands of river valleys through which *Picea obovata* penetrates far into the tundra. Based on our original research and published data by F.V. Sambuk, A.A. Dedov and A.E. Katenin, four associations (with subassociations) have been established: Empetro hermaphroditi–Piceetum obovatae Morozova 2025 (dwarf-shrub–green-moss woodlands) and Betulo nanae–Piceetum obovatae Lavrinenko **ass. nov.** (shrub (*Betula nana*, *Salix glauca*) dwarf-shrub–green-moss woodlands) in the first alliance; and Moehringio lateriflorae–Piceetum obovatae Lavrinenko **ass. nov.** and Aconito septentrionalis–Piceetum obovatae Zaugolnova et Morozova in Morozova 2025 (shrub (*Salix lanata*)–forb and tall-forb spruce and birch–spruce woodlands) in the second alliance. A well-developed layer of hypoarctic shrubs is a characteristic feature of the woodlands both on watersheds and in river valleys at the northern limit of the spruce range. Spruce forests of relict islands in the tundra are described as a new subassociation, Empetro hermaphroditi–Piceetum obovatae arctoetosum alpinae Lavrinenko **subass. nov.**

**Keywords:** open spruce forests and spruce islands, Vaccinio–Piceetea, Braun-Blanquet classification, tundra and forest-tundra, *Picea obovata*

## РЕЗЮМЕ

Лавриненко О.В., Симонова К.И., Котлярчук Е.А., Карсонова Д.Д., Лавриненко И.А. Синтаксономическое разнообразие еловых и березово-еловых редколесий (Vaccinio–Piceetea) на северной границе ареала в Ненецком автономном округе (Россия). Сообщества из *Picea obovata* с участием *Betula pubescens* var. *pumila*, описанные в экотоне тайга-тундра на северо-востоке европейской части России, отнесены к 2 союзам – Empetro hermaphroditi–Piceion obovatae Morozova 2025, описанному ранее для разреженных еловых и березово-еловых лесов севера таёжной зоны, сформированных на водораздельных плато в условиях низких температур, и Aconito rubicundi–Abietion sibiricae Anekhonov et Chytrý 1998 (подсоюз Clematido sibiricae–Piceenion obovatae Zaugolnova in Morozova 2025), объединяющему еловые леса и редколесья речных долин, по которым *Picea obovata* проникает далеко в тундру. По материалам собственных исследований и опубликованных данных Ф.В. Самбука, А.А. Дедова и А.Е. Катенина установлено 4 ассоциации (с субассоциациями): Empetro hermaphroditi–Piceetum obovatae Morozova 2025 (кустарничково-зеленомошные редколесья), Betulo nanae–Piceetum obovatae Lavrinenko **ass. nov.** (кустарничковые (*Betula nana*, *Salix glauca*) кустарничково-зеленомошные редколесья) в первом союзе, Moehringio lateriflorae–Piceetum obovatae Lavrinenko **ass. nov.** и Aconito septentrionalis–Piceetum obovatae Zaugolnova et Morozova in Morozova 2025 (кустарничково (*Salix lanata*)-разнотравные и высокотравные еловые и березово-еловые редколесья) во втором союзе. Наличие хорошо сформированного яруса из гипоарктических кустарников – особенность редколесий как на водоразделах, так и в долинах рек на северной границе ареала ели. Ельники реликтовых островов в тундре описаны как новая субасс. Empetro hermaphroditi–Piceetum obovatae arctoetosum alpinae Lavrinenko **subass. nov.**

**Ключевые слова:** еловые редколесья и острова, Vaccinio–Piceetea, классификация по Браун-Бланке, тундра и лесотундра, *Picea obovata*

The tree line in northeastern European Russia is formed by *Picea obovata*. This boundary is naturally not a distinct line but rather a transition zone 50–100 km wide, which can be divided into southern and northern forest-tundra subzones. In the southern forest-tundra, spruce forests and open woodlands occupy zonal positions in the landscape, while tundra communities are confined to extrazonal habitats (the most elevated, wind-exposed areas with low snow accumulation in winter). In the northern forest-tundra, tundra communities already dominate on plakors (flat watershed surfaces). Here, spruce open woodlands and forest patches are restricted to intrazonal habitats, such as sheltered slopes of hills and ridges that accumulate snow and are protected from harsh northern winds, as well as river valleys, along which spruce forests penetrate farther north.

Significant changes are occurring in the vegetation cover of the climatically sensitive taiga–tundra ecotone due to contemporary climate warming. We have recorded such changes in relict spruce patches that have persisted in the Bolshezemelskaya and Malozemelskaya tundras at approximately 68°N since the Holocene thermal optimum, maintaining their original positions in the landscape. These changes are expressed primarily in a substantial increase in the height and trunk diameter of spruce trees and a slight expansion of the patch area through vegetative reproduction via rooting of lower branches (Lavrinenko & Lavrinenko 1999, 2003, Lavrinenko et al. 2024). However, the most pronounced changes are occurring further south, in the forest-tundra strip. The northern boundary of this strip lies at 67°45'N (west of the Pechora River) and 67°10'N (east of the Pechora River). For the Bolshezemelskaya tundra, satellite imagery is available since the 1960s. Its comparison with modern imagery reveals an expansion of forested areas, encroachment of individual trees into tundra communities on watersheds, and a northward advance of island-like spruce open woodlands along river valleys. It is crucial to document the current composition and structure of forest communities to establish effective monitoring of vegetation cover at the northern forest limit. This can be achieved through comprehensive geobotanical surveys with precise georeferencing, which can serve as baseline data for future comparisons.

During the period of 1930–1960s, geobotanists F.V. Sambuk, A.A. Dedov and A.E. Katenin conducted research and published tables with relevés of spruce communities in the northern taiga and forest-tundra of northeastern European Russia. Their classification of open woodlands is traditionally based on an ecological-phytocoenotic (dominant) approach. In the forest-tundra strip bordering the Malozemelskaya tundra and in the northern part of the Timan Ridge, Dedov (1940, 2006) described several associations representing different groups of spruce forests: lichen, moss–forb, and forb spruce forests. In the southern part of the forest-tundra strip, in the middle reaches of the Pechora River and its tributary the Usa River, Sambuk (1932) described associations divided into four groups: *Piceetum cladinosum*, *Piceeta hylacomiosa*, *Piceeta polytrichosa*, and *Piceeta sphagnosa*. He described the most distinctive associations of northern spruce forests, characterized by a well-developed shrub layer of *Betula nana* or *Salix* spp.: *Piceetum*

*nano-betulosum mixtum* on permafrost-affected grounds and *Piceetum salicosum* in areas with a lowered permafrost table. In the easternmost region near the Urals, Katenin (1972) described 13 associations of spruce forests and open woodlands on the northern taiga and southern forest-tundra. He accompanied communities of the open woodland association rank with descriptions of microphytocoenoses of both the tree layer and the tundra-shrub and valley-shrub layers. This approach reflects the specific character of the forest-tundra vegetation type.

Some of Sambuk's materials have already been used for the classification of spruce forests according to the Braun-Blanquet approach. Morozova (Morozova et al. 2008, Morozova 2025) proposed and described the association *Empetro hermaphroditi–Piceetum obovatae* Morozova 2025 and the alliance *Empetro hermaphroditi–Piceion obovatae* Morozova 2025. This alliance unites dwarf-shrub–green-moss (with some sphagnum) open spruce (*Picea obovata*, *P. abies*), birch–spruce, and pine–spruce forests of the northern taiga zone of European Russia. These forests grow under low temperatures and often increased (sometimes temporary) moisture conditions. The suballiance *Clematido sibiricae–Piceion obovatae* Zaugolnova in Morozova 2025 has been described for tall-herb dark coniferous and derived small-leaved forests of the eastern sector of the northern and middle taiga in European Russia. The system of higher syntaxa for dark coniferous forests is evolving and undergoing changes as new material accumulates. While the authors initially (Morozova et al. 2008, Zaugolnova et al. 2009) placed these syntaxa within the sub-Atlantic European order *Piceetalia excelsae* Pawłowski et al. 1928, they later (Morozova 2025) assigned them to the order *Piceo obovatae–Pinetalia sibiricae* Ermakov 2025. This order unites continental Ural-Siberian zonal dark coniferous forests and extends into the northeastern part of European Russia (Ermakov & Martynenko 2022).

This article presents a floristic classification of spruce forests and open woodlands of the northern and southern forest-tundra strips of the European Northeast. The classification is based on the authors' original materials with the inclusion of data from Soviet geobotanists.

## MATERIAL AND METHODS

### Study area

The sampling sites where the authors collected material to describe open spruce woodlands (canopy cover 20–30 %) and forests (canopy cover 40 % and above) are located in the northern forest-tundra strip, adjacent from the south to the Malozemelskaya and Bolshezemelskaya tundras. The sites of relict spruce patches are situated in the southern tundra subzone, within the territories of both tundras. Administratively, the study areas belong to the Nenets Autonomous Area. The primary factor determining the position of the forest limit is temperature. At a global scale, it has long been observed that elevational and latitudinal treelines occur at similar mean growing season air temperature isotherms ~6–7°C; deviations indicate the influence of other limiting factors (Maher et al. 2021). In different landscapes,

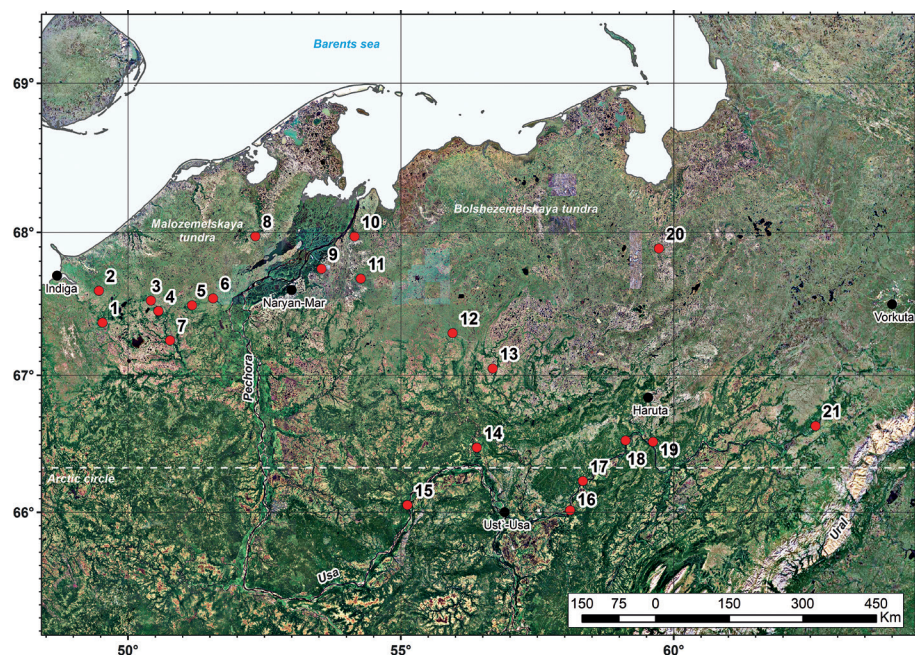
this limit is expressed on the ground either as a distinct frontal line (timberline,  $\approx 100$  trees/ha) or as a diffuse zone in the form of isolated spruce "islands" and solitary trees (treeline,  $\approx 1$  tree/ha), located ahead of the continuous forest front. The warming effect, the presence of taliks, and the sheltered slopes of river valleys provide the most favorable habitats for tree growth in the tundra. Tongue-shaped forest islands penetrate deep into the tundra along the valleys of meridionally flowing rivers.

The study area is located in the subarctic climate zone, characterized by long harsh winters, short summers, indistinct transitional seasons, and considerable cloudiness, with continentality increasing from west to east. The Nenets Autonomous Area stretches along the Barents Sea coast for nearly a thousand kilometers. In its western part, there is a moderating influence of Atlantic air masses. Consequently, the mean annual air temperature decreases from west to east:  $-1.2^{\circ}\text{C}$  (Indiga),  $-2.3^{\circ}\text{C}$  (Naryan-Mar),  $-3.7^{\circ}\text{C}$  (Kharuta), and  $-5.5^{\circ}\text{C}$  (Vorkuta) (Fig. 1). The coldest month is January, with mean monthly temperatures ranging from  $-13.6^{\circ}\text{C}$  (Indiga) and  $-17.0^{\circ}\text{C}$  (Naryan-Mar) to  $-18.1^{\circ}\text{C}$  (Ust-Usa) and  $-21.9^{\circ}\text{C}$  (Vorkuta). Snow cover persists for an average of 180 days in the western part and up to 240 days in the eastern part. The warmest month is July; the mean monthly temperature increases from north to south:  $+11.6^{\circ}\text{C}$  (Indiga),  $+13.5^{\circ}\text{C}$  (Naryan-Mar, Vorkuta), and  $+15.5^{\circ}\text{C}$  (Ust-Usa). The region is located in an area of excessive moisture, with annual precipitation ranging from 550 to 650 mm (at least 30 % of which falls as snow). The annual precipitation maximum occurs in summer, while the minimum occurs in late winter and early spring. Due to permafrost, low temperatures, and minimal evaporation, most of this moisture stagnates in closed depressions, promoting waterlogging and resulting in a high density of lakes across the territory (Climate Data 2025).

The specific climatic features in different parts of the Nenets Autonomous Area explain why the boundary of open woodlands lies farther north in the west, at approximately  $67^{\circ}45'\text{N}$ , and significantly farther south in the more continental eastern regions, at approximately  $67^{\circ}10'\text{N}$ . The boundary reaches its northernmost extent along the broad valley of the Pechora River (including its right-bank tributaries), which exerts a strong warming influence on the local climate.

We conducted our own geobotanical surveys at nine sites located in the northern forest-tundra strip: in the western part of the Okrug (Fig. 1, sites 2, 3, 5), on the right bank of the Pechora River (sites 9–11), and in the eastern part of the Okrug (sites 12–14). In addition, for the classification we incorporated the relevés of our predecessors: Dedov's from the northern and southern forest-tundra (sites 1, 4, 6, 7) in the western part of the Okrug; Sambuk's from the southern forest-tundra and northern taiga (sites 14–19) in the eastern half of the Okrug along the middle reaches of the Pechora River; and Katenin's from the southern forest-tundra and northern taiga in the easternmost area (site 21), where the taiga-tundra ecotone is narrow and the forest limit is expressed as a distinct front.

In the Neruta, Ortina, and More-Yu river basins within the tundra zone (Fig. 1, sites 8, 10, 20), relevés were additionally conducted in small relict patches on watersheds that have maintained their current position in the relief since the Holocene. These rivers share a common feature: they flow from south to north across a plateau composed of a thick layer of sands deposited during the boreal marine transgression of the Mikulino Interglacial and later reworked by glaciation. The dominance of these well-drained and well-warmed sands in the area is one of the primary ecological factors enabling the preservation and spread of trees here.



**Figure 1** Study area. **Field sites by authors:** 2 – Bolshaya Mutnaya River (O. Lavrinenko); 3 – Lusuteito Lake surroundings (O. Lavrinenko); 5 – Bolshoye Leysato Lake surroundings (O. Lavrinenko); 8 – Neruta River (O. Lavrinenko); 9 – Pechora River, the area around Naryan-Mar, including the Listvennichnaya River on the road to the Krasnoye village (O. Lavrinenko) and Telvisochnoye village surroundings (Sambuk 1932); 10 – Ortina River (O. & I. Lavrinenko, Simonova); 11 – Severnaya River (O. Lavrinenko, Karsonova, Simonova); 12 – Laya River near the bridge (O. Lavrinenko, Kotlyarchuk, Simonova); 13 – Kolva River basin (Kharayakha River, Ydzhydoshshor stream) (O. & I. Lavrinenko); 20 – More-Yu River (O. Lavrinenko); **Field sites by Dedov (1940):** 1 – Northern Timan, Belaya and Malaya Svetlaya rivers, and Indiga River near Popovych village; 4 – Khvostovaya River, Odir Ridge, Aputey Lake; 6 – Durakova River and Seduiakha River between Srednyaya and Sharapush River mouths; 7 – Soima River, Ledkovo village and Listvennichnaya River; **Field sites by Sambuk (1932):** 14 – Pechora River is 8 km below of Laya River mouth and 4 km below of Zakhar-Van village, Laya River is 30–50 km from the mouth, 15 – Pechora River, Mutnyy Materik and Kipievo villages; 16 – Usa River, mouth of Synya River; 17 – Usa River, mouth of Makarikha River; 18 – Usa River, mouth of Adzva-vom Stream; 19 – Usa River, middle reaches, Chernyshev Ridge; **Field sites by Katenin (1972):** 21 – Usa River, railway station Sivaya Maska

Furthermore, these areas are characterized by a hilly-ridge or dissected topography and, consequently, the presence of slopes that provide shelter from cold winds.

### Sampling and data analysis

The syntaxonomic analysis is based on 108 relevés, 38 of which were sampled at various sites between 1999 and 2024 by O.V. Lavrinenko, 19 by O.V. Lavrinenko in collaboration with other researchers (6 with A.I. Grishnyakova, 5 with D.D. Karsonova, 4 with I.A. Lavrinenko, and 4 with K.I. Simonova), 13 by K.I. Simonova, and 2 by E.A. Kotlyarchuk. For the analysis, we also incorporated 22 relevés by Dedov (2006) and 15 by Sambuk (1932), originally conducted using the dominant classification system. For comparison, we included descriptions of associations established within the same system by A.E. Katenin (1972). The coordinates of these authors' study sites were derived from maps.

We identified all species (vascular plants, bryophytes, and lichens) on 100–400 m<sup>2</sup> plots (or within the natural boundaries of relict spruce patches) and estimated both the total cover (%) and cover abundance scores using the Braun-Blanquet scale (Becking 1957, Barkman et al. 1964): r – solitary individuals; + – <1 %; 1 – 1–5 %; 2a – 6–12 %; 2b – 13–25 %; 3 – 26–50 %; 4 – 51–75 %; 5 – 76–100 %. Coordinates were recorded using Garmin GPS devices (see notes to Tables 1–3).

Species abundance estimates (ranging from 1 to 6) in the relevés of Dedov (2006) and Sambuk (1932) are retained as originally published by these authors. According to Sambuk, this corresponds to the Drude numerical scale: 6 – soc, 5 – cop3, 4 – cop2, 3 – cop1, 2 – sp, 1 – sol. However, because the abundance estimates in the relevés of Sambuk and Dedov do not always align with each other, we calculated species constancy with median abundance separately for each author's set of relevés and did not convert these values to Braun-Blanquet scale scores. In Katenin's (1972) relevés, the Drude scale is used, but percent cover is also provided for some species. This allowed conversion of such values to Braun-Blanquet abundance scores: cop2 → 3, cop1 → 2b, sp → 2a or 1, sol → +, un → r.

The vegetation was classified according to the Braun-Blanquet sorted-table method (Westhoff & van der Maarel 1978) to order the relevés.

Species constancy in the tables is given as a percentage scale (%): I – > 0–20, II – 21–40, III – 41–60, IV – 61–80, V – 81–100. Species with constancy classes V and IV are considered highly constant. Median abundance values (if not given, they are "+" or "r") for each species were used to characterize the syntaxa. To calculate these, Braun-Blanquet scale values were converted to an 8-point numerical scale.

In describing alliances, associations, and subordinate syntaxa, we applied the concept of a "differential species combination" (Beefink 1965, Molenaar 1976), a group of taxa that together characterize a syntaxon, even if individual species may not be diagnostic alone. Differential species combinations were identified by comparing new syntaxa with those previously described for spruce forests of the European Northeast. The term "character species" was used for higher syntaxonomic units (Braun-Blanquet 1932, Westhoff & van der Maarel 1978).

The nomenclature of species follows Chepinoga et al. (2024) for vascular plants (with Plants of the World Online (POWO 2025) consulted for *Betula pubescens* var. *pumila*), Hodgetts et al. (2020) for bryophytes, and Santesson et al. (2004) for lichens. Geographical and ecological characteristics for vascular plants follows Sekretareva (2024). The new syntaxonomic units were named according to the fourth edition of the International Code of Phytosociological Nomenclature (ICPN) (Theurillat et al. 2021). Authors of syntaxa are given in the text at first mention and in the conspectus.

## RESULTS

After processing the relevés (Tables 1–3) and synoptic table (Table 4), spruce and birch-spruce forests and open woodlands in the forest-tundra strip of the European Northeast were assigned to four associations (with sub-associations) belonging to two alliances of the coniferous boreal forest class Vaccinio–Piceetea Br.-Bl. in Br.-Bl. et al. 1939.

### Conspectus of the syntaxa

#### Class

#### Subclass

#### Order

#### Alliance

#### Suballiance

#### Association

#### Subassociation

#### Variant

Vaccinio–Piceetea Br.-Bl. in Br.-Bl. et al. 1939

Piceenea abieti-obovatae Ermakov 2025

Piceo obovatae–Pinetalia sibiricae Ermakov 2025

Empetro hermaphroditi–Piceion obovatae  
Morozova 2025

Empetro hermaphroditi–Piceetum obovatae  
Morozova 2025

typicum

arctoetosum alpinae O. Lavrinenko **subass. nov.**

Betulo nanae–Piceetum obovatae O.  
Lavrinenko **ass. nov.**

typicum

typica

Bistorta elliptica

caricetosum globularis (Sambuk 1932) O.

Lavrinenko **subass. nov.**

Aconito rubicundi–Abietion sibiricae

Anekhnov et Chytrý 1998

Clematido sibiricae–Piceenion obovatae

Zaugolnova in Morozova 2025

Moehringio lateriflorae–Piceetum obovatae  
O. Lavrinenko **ass. nov.**

typicum

typica

inops

delphinietosum elati O. Lavrinenko **subass. nov.**

Aconito septentrionalis–Piceetum obovatae

Zaugolnova et Morozova in Morozova 2025

cornetosum suecicae O. Lavrinenko **subass. nov.**

filipenduletosum ulmariae Zaugolnova,

Smirnova, Braslavskaja, Degteva, Prokasina et

Lugovaya in Morozova 2025

Anthoxanthum alpinum









**Figure 2** Spruce open woodlands and habitats. A–C – subass. *Empetro hermaphroditi*–*Piceetum obovatae* typicum near Naryan-Mar: A – view of the stand (Table 1, rel. no. 22 (HM22\_22)), B – dwarf shrub-green moss ground cover and C – podzolic soils (Table 1, rel. no. 21 (HM10\_22)); D–F – relict spruce patches of the subass. *Empetro hermaphroditi*–*Piceetum obovatae arctoetosum alpinae*: D – location near a sandy outcrop in Ortina River basin (Table 1, rel. no. 39 (Op7\_23), photo from a UAV), E – view of the stand in Severnaya River basin (Table 1, rel. no. 34 (Ceb O3\_25)), F – *Arctous alpina* in the dwarf shrub-green moss ground cover (Table 1, rel. no. 39 (Op7\_23)); G–H – subass. *Betulo nanae*–*Piceetum obovatae* typicum var. *Bistorta elliptica* in Laya River basin: G – location on a gentle slope of a ridge (Table 2, rel. no. 2 (AE7)), H – shrub and grass-dwarf shrub layers (Table 2, rel. no. 1 (A56)); I–K – subass. *Moehringio lateriflorae*–*Piceetum obovatae* typicum: I – location on low river terraces in Laya River valley and J – grasses in the lower layer (Table 3, rel. no. 5 (AE14), K – podzolic soils (Table 3, rel. no. 3 (HM37)); L–N – subass. *Moehringio lateriflorae*–*Piceetum obovatae delphinietosum elati* in Severnaya River basin: L – view of the stand and M – tall grasses in the lower layer (Table 3, rel. no. 13 (CaA5)); N – alluvial humus soils (Table 3, rel. no. 10 (CaA1)); O–P – subass. *Aconito septentrionalis*–*Piceetum obovatae cornetosum suecicae*: O – location on a gentle slope of a ridge in Lusuteito Lake surroundings (Table 3, rel. no. 21 (B48)), P – tall grasses in the lower layer of open woodlands in Bolshoye Leysato Lake surroundings (Table 3, rel. no. 14 (A5)). Photos D, G, I, J and N were taken by K. Simonova, the rest by O. Lavrinenko

12 m. Half of the communities contain *Betula pubescens* var. *pubula* as a mix to spruce, and feature *Juniperus sibirica* (1) in the shrub layer. A dense dwarf shrub layer is dominated by *Vaccinium vitis-idaea* s. l. (3) and *Empetrum hermaphroditum* (2a); *Vaccinium uliginosum* s. l. (1) and *Linnaea borealis* (1) are less constant and abundant. The ground cover is continuous, formed by the green mosses *Pleurozium schreberi* (4) and *Hylocomium splendens* (2b). The communities are species-poor, with alpha diversity ranging from 17 to 23 species and a mean of 20, including 2 trees, 2 shrubs, 4 dwarf shrubs, 4 herbs, 5 bryophytes and 3 lichens.

A distinctive feature of the open spruce woodlands described in the forest-tundra strip north of the Arctic Circle by Dedov (Sites 1, 4, 6, 7) and by us (Fig. 1, Sites 9, 12), in contrast to the subassociation communities described further south near the Arctic Circle by Sambuk (1932) (Sites 14–19) and Katenin (Site 21), is the absence or rarity of the boreal species *Rhododendron tomentosum*, *Carex globularis*, and *Equisetum sylvaticum*, as well as the moss *Ptilium crista-castrensis*. Conversely, these northern woodlands show constancy of the arcto-boreal species *Equisetum arvense* s. l. and *Festuca ovina*, and the hypoarctic-montane liverwort *Ptilidium ciliare*.

In the southern tundra subzone, in areas disjunct from the main range of *Picea obovata*, we described communities of relict spruce patches that have persisted in the same landscape positions since the Holocene thermal optimum. We have previously discussed the persistence of spruce at its northernmost distribution limit on multiple occasions, addressing their floristic composition, structure, and dynamics in relation to climate change (Lavrinenko & Lavrinenko 1999, 2003, Lavrinenko et al. 2024). An analysis of relevés collected within the boundaries of spruce patches from different areas of the Bolshezemelskaya and Malozemelskaya tundras allowed us to distinguish them at the rank of a new subassociation.

***Empetro hermaphroditi*–*Piceetum obovatae arctoetosum alpinae* O. Lavrinenko subass. nov.** (Table 1, rel. 27–47, Table 4, syntaxon 5; Fig. 2D–2F)

**Holotypus:** Table 1, relevé 39 (author's number Op7\_23), Nenets Autonomous Area, Bolshezemelskaya tundra, middle reaches of the Ortina River (north of the Bykshor stream), 67.91042°N 54.05328°E, the gentle outer slope of a sandy deflation basin on a plain, a spruce patch E4, 22.07.2023, author O.V. Lavrinenko.

**Composition.** Differential species combination in the subassociation: the hypoarctic-montane dwarf shrub *Arctous alpina* (1), the psammophilous herbs *Campanula rotundifolia*, *Koeleria pobleana*, *Tanacetum bipinnatum* and lichens *Flanocetraria cucullata*, *Peltigera malacea* and *Stereocaulon alpinum*. Among these species of the association and corresponding alliance, only *Empetrum hermaphroditum* (2a) and *Dicranum majus* (1) show high constancy. The subassociation differs from the typical one in its high species diversity, which is primarily due to numerous low-abundance lichens and

herbs, many of which are psammophytes. Total number of taxa registered in subassociation is 131: 58 vascular plants (2 trees, 5 shrubs, 10 dwarf shrubs, 41 herbs), 23 bryophytes and 50 lichens.

**Structure.** The total cover in the communities is 100 %, with the mean cover of trees 60 %, dwarf shrubs 40 % and mosses 50 %. Covers of shrubs, herbs and lichens are usually from less than 1 % to 5 %, values above only in rare cases. Relict spruce patches consist of closely spaced groups of thin-stemmed trees, which often exhibit a skirt-like growth form with conical and narrowly pyramidal crowns and well-developed lower branches capable of rooting. All trunks within a group share a common root system and represent clones formed through vegetative propagation via the rooting of lower branches and the change in their growth direction from plagiotropic to orthotropic (Lavrinenko & Lavrinenko 2003). The trunks are of different ages, meaning this process is continuous, contributing to the expansion of the area of individual spruce groups and the patches as a whole.

In 2025, for the first time, we recorded spruce saplings of seed origin around relict patches in the basin of the Severnaya River at latitude 67°37'50"N. In more northerly relict patches spruce spreads only vegetatively (Lavrinenko et al. 2024). The average height of the tallest trees in different patches varies from 2 to 6 m, with a basal diameter of 10–15 cm. In the northernmost patches, on wind-swept terrace edges and raised microtopographic elements, spruce takes on a prostrate (*krummholz*) form with individual dead stems. Due to the high canopy closure within tree groups, the interior is devoid of ground cover. A dwarf shrub-moss cover forms under the lower spruce branches along their periphery, while in the clearings between groups, the cover is predominantly dwarf shrubs with a minor presence of herbs and lichens. *Arctous alpina*, *Empetrum hermaphroditum*, and *Vaccinium vitis-idaea* s. l. co-dominate in the dwarf shrub layer, with *Linnaea borealis* sometimes being abundant. The ground moss cover is thick and dense, dominated by *Pleurozium schreberi*, *Hylocomium splendens* and *Ptilidium ciliare* are less abundant. The occurrence of the boreal mosses *Hylocomiadelphus triquetrus* and *Ptilium crista-castrensis* in the tundra is associated exclusively with these relict patches. Alpha diversity within the described spruce patches ranges from 13 to 61 species, averaging is is 39, including 2 trees, 2 shrubs, 4 dwarf shrubs, 9 herbs, 7 bryophytes and 15 lichens.

**Habitats.** Spruce patches are often spatially associated with sandy exposures (exposed glaciofluvial sand deposits) on watersheds and occupy elevated topographic elements – mounds in the central parts of deflation basins and the outer parts of their rims (Fig. 2D). They also occur on the edges of high river valley slopes and in the upper parts of ravine slopes, where there is protection from cold northern winds, good drainage, and an absence or deep occurrence of permafrost. A buried podzolic horizon is often revealed







the spruce. The shrub layer is dense and difficult to penetrate, with a height of (50)70–100(150) cm. In half of the communities, in addition to *Betula nana* and *Salix glauca*, other willows – *Salix lanata* and *S. phylicifolia* – also occur. A dense dwarf shrub layer, 10–20(25) cm tall, is formed beneath the shrub canopy. Besides species of *Vaccinium* spp. and *Empetrum hermaphroditum*, *Rhododendron tomentosum* is constantly present in this layer. Herbs, with the exception of semi-herb *Rubus chamaemorus*, are low in abundance. *Rubus arcticus* and *Equisetum pratense* are constantly present; in half of the communities, *Equisetum arvense* s. l., *E. palustre*, *Pedicularis lapponica*, and *Lysimachia europaea* occur. *Pleurozium schreberi* and *Hylocomium splendens* co-dominate the continuous ground cover. *Dicranum majus* and *Polytrichum commune* are constant admixtures, and *Sphagnum girgensohnii* is frequent. Lichens are low in abundance and grow on top of or are interspersed within the moss cover – the most common are the foliose species *Nephroma arcticum*, *Peltigera aphthosa*, *P. scabrosa*, and the fruticose species *Cladonia rangiferina* and *C. stygia*.

**Habitats.** Dwarf shrub-green moss open spruce woodlands with a dense shrub layer occupy gentle slopes of loamy ridges and hills on watersheds, as well as the upper and middle parts of gentle river valley slopes of any aspect with a gradient of 3–10°. Peaty podzolic gley soils underlain by loam are found beneath these communities.

**Distribution.** The northern and southern forest-tundra adjacent to the Timanskaya, Malozemelskaya and Bolshezemelskaya tundras (Fig. 1, site 1, 4, 7, 12–15).

Based on variation in species composition driven by latitudinal gradient and moisture conditions, 2 subassociations were identified – typicum and caricetosum globularis.

**Betulo nanae–Piceetum obovatae typicum subass. nov.** (Table 2, rel. 1–17, Table 4, syntaxon 6; Fig. 2G–2H)

**Holotypus** = holotypus of the association (autonym, Art. 5b, 13b).

**Composition.** The same as the association. Alpha diversity ranges from 23 to 44 species, averaging is 31, including 2 trees, 3 shrubs, 5 dwarf shrubs, 9 herbs, 5 bryophytes and 7 lichens. Based on variation in species composition, 2 variants were identified – *Bistorta elliptica* (Table 2, rel. 1–6) and *typica* (rel. 7–17). Open woodlands of the var. *Bistorta elliptica* differ from the typical variant by the co-dominance of *Betula nana* and willows (*Salix glauca* and *S. lanata*) in the shrub layer, the constant presence of *Linnaea borealis* and *Bistorta elliptica* in the herb-dwarf shrub layer, and the frequent occurrence of other tundra herb species: *Bistorta vivipara*, *Equisetum scirpoides*, *Pedicularis lapponica*, *Pyrola minor*, *Solidago lapponica*, *Valeriana capitata*. In the communities of the var. *typica*, lichen diversity is higher.

**Structure.** The same as the association.

**Habitats.** Open spruce woodlands of the var. *Bistorta elliptica* are described on extensive gentle slopes of loamy moraine ridges with slow lateral moisture flow. The communities of the var. *typica* often occupies the upper parts of well-drained gentle slopes of high river valley banks composed of loam.

**Distribution.** Communities have been described in the northern forest-tundra in the Laya and Kolva river basins (Fig. 1, site 12, 13).

The subassociation described below, based on the relevés by Sambuk (1932) and Dedov (2006), unites open spruce woodlands with a shrub layer of *Betula nana* in slightly paludified habitats of the southern forest-tundra. The open spruce woodlands described by Katenin (1972) also belong to this subassociation (see Table 2, syntaxa e–g).

**Betulo nanae–Piceetum obovatae caricetosum globularis (Sambuk 1932) O.**

**Lavrinenko subass. nov.** (Table 2, rel. 18–33, Table 4, syntaxa 7–11)

**Lectotypus:** Table 2, relevé 21 (author's number 98), Komi Republic, right bank of the Pechora River, 2 km downstream from the Kipievo village, 65.64556°N 54.47000°E (taken from the map), slope of river valleys of northern face, 16.08.1928, author F.V. Sambuk (1932: 185–189, Table, author's number 98).

**Composition.** Differential species combination of the subassociation: *Andromeda polifolia*, *Carex globularis*, *Eriophorum vaginatum* and *Polytrichum strictum*.

**Structure.** The spruce layer is sparse; the tree cover varies between 20 and 50 %. Alpha diversity ranges from 18 to 26 species, averaging is 23, including 2 trees, 1 shrub, 6 dwarf shrubs, 4 herbs, 5 bryophytes and 5 lichens. The trees are stunted and low-growing, (4)6–7(8) m tall, with narrow crowns, often multi-stemmed and with dead tops. Spruce is accompanied by *Betula pubescens* in a dwarf growth form (i.e., var. *pumila*). The shrub layer is mainly *Betula nana*. The herb-dwarf shrub layer consistently includes *Andromeda polifolia*, *Rhododendron tomentosum*, *Carex globularis* and *Rubus chamaemorus*. The ground cover is mosaic; in different communities it is formed by patches of green mosses together with polytrichaceous and cushions of sphagnum mosses.

**Habitats.** Weakly paludified habitats outside river valleys – flat areas on hilltops and the lower parts of gentle (up to 10°) slopes of moraine hills with poorly drained to slightly stagnant moisture regime. The communities develop on peaty podzolic gley soils underlain by loam; the peat layer is 10–15 cm thick. In early August, permafrost was recorded (Sambuk 1932) at a depth of 85–100 cm.

**Distribution.** Communities have been described within the southern forest-tundra stripe: west of the Pechora River (Fig. 1, sites 1, 4, 7), on the northernmost knee-shaped bend of the Pechora River (sites 14, 15), and at the easternmost site – the Sivaya Maska railway station (site 21).

Two associations of herb-rich (with tall herbs) spruce and mixed birch (*Betula pubescens* s. l.)–spruce forests and open woodlands are assigned to the suballiance *Clematido sibiricae–Piceenion obovatae*. This suballiance is described for dark-coniferous and the small-leaved forests derived from them in the eastern sector of the northern and middle taiga of European Russia. *Abies sibirica*, *Aconitum septentrionale*, *Clematis sibirica*, *Parasenecio bastatus*, *Cirsium heterophyllum*, *Lathyrus vernus*, *Milium effusum*, *Picea obovata*, *Senecio nemorensis*, *Stellaria bungeana*, *Valeriana officinalis* (*V. wolgensis*), *Veratrum lobelianum* are the diagnostic species of the suballiance (Zaugolnova et al. 2009). The authors initially placed it within the alliance *Piceion excelsae* Pawlowski et al. 1928, which unites dark-coniferous taiga forests of Europe. Later, however, Morozova (2025), following Ermakov & Martynenko (2022), reassigned it to the alliance *Aconito rubicundi–Abietion sibiricae* Anenkhonov et Chytrý 1998. This alliance groups moderately cold-tolerant Ural-Siberian southern taiga forests with a significant presence of Euro-Siberian tall-herb species. Its differential species combination: *Aconitum leucostomum*, *A. septentrionalis*, *A. volubile*, *Parasenecio bastatus*, *Cirsium heterophyllum*, *C. helenioides*, *Crepis sibirica*, *Delphinium elatum*, *Geranium albiflorum*, *G. sylvaticum*, *Heracleum dissectum*, *Senecio nemorensis*, *Thalictrum flavum*, *Lilium pilosiusculum* (Ermakov 2012, Ermakov & Martynenko 2022). Ermakov noted that such forests pene-

**Table 3.** Associations of the suballiance *Clematido sibiricae*–*Piceenion obovatae* in the forest-tundra of the Nenets Autonomous Area

Association	Moehringio lateriflorae–Piceetum obovatae (c)													Aconito septentrionalis–Piceetum obovatae								Constancy and abundance	P. s.																					
	typicum (a)						delphinietosum elati (b)							cornetosum suecicae (d)				filipenduletosum ulmariae																										
	inops			typica										Anthoxanthum alpinum (e)																														
Cover, %: total trees	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–													
shrubs	80	80	90	20	20	30	40	80	20	60	80	80	70	40	20	30	60	60	30	30	30	30	30	40	60	30	70	70	40	70														
dwarf shrubs	2	7	1	60	70	50	40	10	70	40	10	20	40	15	20	50	30	20	60	40	30	30	30	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–													
herbs	<1	10	5	5	2	5	5	25	60	40	20	5	25	<5	50	20	10	<5	40	30	40	40	40	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–													
bryophytes	15	15	20	15	60	20	20	30	10	20	70	30	40	80	5	30	30	40	5	10	10	10	10	–	50	–	75	75	–	–	–													
lichens	90	90	95	90	60	60	60	40	90	80	90	80	60	20	80	10	50	20	40	60	30	30	30	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–													
	<1	<1	<1	0	0	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	1	5	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–													
Date	04.08.2022	04.08.2022	04.08.2022	29.07.2024	29.07.2024	29.07.2024	29.07.2024	23.07.2023	21.07.2025	15.07.2025	16.07.2025	16.07.2025	18.07.2025	22.06.2006	21.06.2006	27.06.2006	01.07.2006	02.07.2006	25.06.2006	30.06.2006	26.06.2006	26.06.2006	10.08.1928	12.08.1928	30.06.1937	02.05.1931	21.08.1931	12.08.1928	09.09.1931		22.09.1927													
Locality (nr. in Fig. 1)	9	9	9	12	12	12	12	10	11	11	11	11	11	5	5	3	2	2	3	2	2	2	1	1	6	4	7	1	7		9													
Relev nr. by author	HM35_22	HM36_22	HM37_22	AE13	AE14	AE12	AE15	Op9_23	CaA014	CaA1	CaA4	CaA3	CaA5	A5	A1	B59	C92	C102	B28	C79	B48	66	75	466	404	323	74	408		109														
Relev nr. in the table	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	a	b	c	d	e	f*										
<b>Differential species combination of the Moehringio lateriflorae–Piceetum obovatae typicum</b>																																												
<i>Moehringia lateriflora</i>	r	+	r	r	r	r	+	r	r	+	+	+	+	r	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	V <sup>r</sup>	V <sup>+</sup>	V <sup>+</sup>	II <sup>+</sup>	II <sup>3</sup>	·								
<i>Vicia cracca</i>	r	r	+	+	+	+	+	r	r	+	+	+	+	r	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	V <sup>+</sup>	IV <sup>+</sup>	V <sup>+</sup>	V <sup>+</sup>	II <sup>+</sup>	·								
<i>Salix lanata</i>	·	·	+	2b	3	2b	1	1	2b	2a	2a	2a	2a	+	+	1	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	IV <sup>2b</sup>	V <sup>2a</sup>	V <sup>2a</sup>	V <sup>2a</sup>	II <sup>+</sup>	·								
<i>Geranium albijlorum</i> A-A	·	·	2a	2a	2a	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	IV <sup>2a</sup>	III <sup>+</sup>	IV <sup>2a</sup>	I <sup>+</sup>	·	·								
<i>Tanacetum bipinnatum</i>	·	·	·	·	+	+	+	r	+	+	+	r	+	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	III <sup>+</sup>	V <sup>+</sup>	III <sup>+</sup>	·	·	·								
<i>Astragalus subpolaris</i>	·	·	·	·	1	1	+	·	+	+	+	r	+	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	III <sup>+</sup>	IV <sup>+</sup>	III <sup>+</sup>	·	·	·								
<i>Primula matthioli</i>	r	1	r	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	r	+	+	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	III <sup>+</sup>	III <sup>+</sup>	III <sup>+</sup>	I <sup>+</sup>	·	·									
<b>Differential species combination of the Moehringio lateriflorae–Piceetum obovatae delphinietosum elati</b>																																												
<i>Salix hastata</i>	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	+	2a	2a	+	2a	2a	1	+	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	V <sup>2a</sup>	III <sup>2a</sup>	II <sup>+</sup>	·	·	4								
<i>Delphinium elatum</i> A-A	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	r	r	r	r	r	r	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	V <sup>r</sup>	III <sup>r</sup>	V <sup>r</sup>	·	III <sup>+</sup>	·								
<i>Ptilidium ciliare</i>	r	·	·	·	·	·	·	+	1	+	+	+	+	·	·	+	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	I <sup>r</sup>	V <sup>+</sup>	III <sup>+</sup>	I <sup>+</sup>	·	·								
<i>Equisetum scirpoides</i>	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	r	r	r	r	r	r	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	V <sup>r</sup>	III <sup>r</sup>	·	·	·	·								
<i>Rhytidadelphus squarrosus</i>	·	·	r	·	·	·	·	·	·	+	+	+	1	2b	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	I <sup>r</sup>	IV <sup>+</sup>	III <sup>+</sup>	·	·	·								
<i>Timmia austriaca</i>	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	+	1	2a	1	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	IV <sup>+</sup>	II <sup>+</sup>	·	·	·	·								
<i>Poa palustris</i>	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	+	+	+	+	+	+	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	IV <sup>+</sup>	II <sup>+</sup>	·	·	·	·								
<b>Differential species combination of the Aconito septentrionalis–Piceetum obovatae typicum</b>																																												
<i>Chamaenerion angustifolium</i>	r	r	+	+	+	2a	1	·	·	·	r	+	1	+	r	·	·	+	r	+	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	V <sup>+</sup>	IV <sup>+</sup>	IV <sup>+</sup>	IV <sup>+</sup>	IV <sup>+</sup>	·								
<i>Thalictrum kemense</i>	·	r	·	+	+	1	·	·	·	·	+	+	1	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	III <sup>+</sup>	III <sup>+</sup>	III <sup>+</sup>	I <sup>+</sup>	V <sup>3</sup>	·								
<i>Calamagrostis purpurea</i>	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	1	·	1	1	+	+	+	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	I <sup>+</sup>	V <sup>+</sup>	I <sup>+</sup>	IV <sup>+</sup>	IV <sup>3</sup>	·								
<i>Ranunculus propinquus</i>	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	I <sup>+</sup>	I <sup>+</sup>	I <sup>+</sup>	V <sup>+</sup>	·	·								
<i>Rosa acicularis</i>	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	III <sup>+</sup>								
<b>Differential species combination of the Aconito septentrionalis–Piceetum obovatae cornetosum suecicae</b>																																												
<i>Cornus suecica</i>	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	+	+	2a	2a	2a	1	1	2a	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	V <sup>2a</sup>	II <sup>+</sup>	·								
<i>Pedicularis lapponica</i>	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	I <sup>r</sup>	I <sup>r</sup>	V <sup>+</sup>	·	·								
<i>Myosotis palustris</i>	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	+	r	+	+	+	+	+	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	IV <sup>+</sup>	·	·								
<i>Valeriana capitata</i>	·	·	2a	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	r	r	r	+	r	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	I <sup>2a</sup>	·	I <sup>2a</sup>	IV <sup>r</sup>	II <sup>+</sup>	·								
<i>Rubus chamaemorus</i>	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	r	+	+	+	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	IV <sup>+</sup>	·	·								
<b>Differential species combination of the Aconito septentrionalis–Piceetum obovatae filipenduletosum ulmariae</b>																																												
<i>Filipendula ulmaria</i>	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	IV <sup>3</sup>								
<i>Trollius europaeus</i>	r	r	+	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	1	r	·	+	·	r	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	III <sup>+</sup>	III <sup>+</sup>	III <sup>+</sup>	III <sup>+</sup>	IV <sup>2</sup>	·								
<i>Vicia sepium</i>	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	r	r	r	+	·	r	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	2	1	2	3	2	3	2	·	II <sup>r</sup>	I <sup>r</sup>	II <sup>r</sup>	V <sup>2</sup>	·	
<i>Geum rivale</i>	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	+	r	r	·	1	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	III <sup>+</sup>	I <sup>2</sup>							
<i>Ranunculus repens</i>	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	2	2	3	·							
<b>Differential species combination of the Aconito septentrionalis–Piceetum obovatae filipenduletosum ulmariae var. Anthoxanthum alpinum</b>																																												
<i>Anthoxanthum alpinum</i>	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	r	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	2	3	2	2	·	3	2	·	·	·	II <sup>+</sup>	V <sup>2</sup>	·	
<i>Lathyrus pratensis</i>	·	·	·	+	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	r	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	1	·	·	3	2	2	2	I <sup>+</sup>	I <sup>r</sup>	I <sup>+</sup>	I <sup>r</sup>	IV <sup>2</sup>	·	
<i>Alchemilla murbeckiana</i>	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	+	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	3	·	3	2	3	·	·	·	I <sup>r</sup>	III <sup>3</sup>	·
<i>Calamagrostis neglecta</i>	·	·	+	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	1	2	·	·	·	2	1	I <sup>+</sup>	·	I <sup>+</sup>	·	III <sup>2</sup>	·	
<i>Ribes nigrum</i>	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	2	2	3	3							



trate far to the north along the broad, moist valleys of large rivers, which have a pronounced warming effect, reaching as far as the northern taiga subzone of the West Siberian Plain.

### **Moehringio lateriflorae–Piceetum obovatae**

**O. Lavrinenko ass. nov.** (Table 3, rel. 1–13, Table 4, syntaxa 12–13; Fig. 2I–2N)

**Holotypus:** Table 3, relevé 5 (author's number AE14), Nenets Autonomus Area, Laya River basin (150 km from Naryan-Mar, near the bridge), 67.29613°N 55.93375°E, river-side floodplain terrace, 29.07.2024, author K.I. Simonova.

**Composition.** Differential species combination of the association: shrub *Salix lanata* (2a) and herbs *Astragalus subpolaris*, *Primula matthioli*, *Geranium albiflorum* (2a), *Moehringia lateriflora*, *Tanacetum bipinnatum*, *Vicia cracca*. In addition to these, 18 more species have highly constancy, including the character species of the class *Vaccinio–Piceetea*. Species of the suballiance *Clematido sibiricae–Piceenion obovatae* and the alliance *Aconito rubicundi–Abietion sibiricae*: *Aconitum septentrionale*, *Delphinium elatum*, *Geranium albiflorum*, *Valeriana wolgensis* and *Veratrum lobelianum* are present in half of the communities. Constant species of this suballiance in the forest-tundra – *Lonicera pallasii*, *Ribes spicatum*, *Saussurea alpina* (1), *Veronica longifolia*, *Viola biflora*, and *Climacium dendroides* – have been recorded in the communities of the association. Total number of taxa registered in association is 110: 79 vascular plants (3 trees, 10 shrubs, 6 dwarf shrubs, 60 herbs), 18 bryophytes and 13 lichens.

**Structure.** The total cover in the communities is 100 %, with the mean cover of trees 60 %, shrubs 30 %, dwarf shrubs 20 %, herbs 30 % and mosses 75 %. Cover of lichens are usually from less than 1 %. The tree layer ranges from sparse (20 %) to dense (80 %) and is formed by spruce trees 8–12 m tall. There is a subordinate mix of *Betula pubescens* var. *pumila*. The shrub layer is predominantly sparse but can be dense, with a height of 100–120(150) cm. It is dominated by *Salix lanata* and *Juniperus sibirica*, with a minor presence of *Lonicera pallasii*, *Ribes spicatum*, *Betula nana*, and *Salix phylicifolia*. Beneath the shrub canopy and in open glades, mesophilic herbs grow, both low (10–20 cm height) and tall (50–80 cm height). A distinctive feature of these communities is the combination of both forest species (*Moehringia lateriflora*, *Moneses uniflora*, *Orthilia secunda*, *Pyrola grandiflora*) and species typical of floodplain communities (meadows and willow thickets) (*Delphinium elatum*, *Galium boreale*, *Geranium albiflorum*, *Thalictrum kemense*, *Trollius europaeus*, *Veronica longifolia*, *Vicia cracca*, among others). *Equisetum arvense* s. l. and *E. pratense* are an obligatory component of the herb layer in these herb-rich spruce forests. The ground cover is continuous or not closed, formed by green mosses, dominated by *Hylacomium splendens* mixed with *Pleurozium schreberi* and *Hylacomiaadelphus triquetrus*, and more rarely *Climacium dendroides* and *Rhytidiadelphus squarrosus*.

**Habitats.** Herb-green moss spruce forests and open woodlands occupy low river terraces and are often found around oxbow lakes in broad river valleys. Beneath the communities are podzols with a well-developed organic (humus) horizon, as well as alluvial humus and alluvial humus gley soils (Fig. 2K, 2N). Areas with these spruce forests are well-drained but become saturated due to a significant rise in the water table during the spring flood.

**Distribution.** Communities are described in the forest-tundra, bordering the Bolshezemelskaya tundra, within the valleys of the Pechora River (vicinity of Naryan-Mar), Ortina, Severnaya, and Laya Rivers (Fig. 1, sites 9–12). The rivers flow from south to north, and along their valleys, spruce penetrates into the northern forest-tundra, forming islands within the river meanders.

**Note.** Table 3 presents relevé "f", recorded by Sambuk (1932:198–200, author's number 109) in the forest-tundra of the lower Pechora River (8 km from Telvisochnoe village). He classified it as the ass. *Piceetum salicosum* (a northern spruce forest association with a dense undergrowth of willows). The spruce stand was located in a flat depression on sandy weakly podzolic soils. The described community can now be identified as the ass. *Moehringio lateriflorae–Piceetum obovatae*.

Based on variation in species composition 2 subassociations were identified – typical and one richer in herbs, including tall herbs, *delphinietosum elati*.

### **Moehringio lateriflorae–Piceetum obovatae**

**typicum subass. nov.** (Table 3, rel. 1–7, Table 4, syntaxon 12; Fig. 2I–2K)

**Holotypus** = holotypus association (autonym, Art. 5b, 13b).

**Composition.** The same as the association. Alpha diversity ranges from 25 to 39 species, averaging is 34, including 2 trees, 5 shrubs, 2 dwarf shrubs, 19 herbs, 5 bryophytes and 1 lichen. Based on variation in species composition, two variants were identified – inops with a depleted differentiating combination of species (Table 3, rel. 1–2) and typica (rel. 3–7).

**Structure.** The same as the association. In communities of the typical variant, there is often a well-developed shrub layer consisting of *Salix lanata* (2b) and *Juniperus sibirica* (2a) mixed with other species.

**Habitats.** High floodplain areas and low floodplain terraces in river valleys under conditions of good drainage and moderately rich podzolic (Fig. 2K) and alluvial humus soils.

**Distribution.** Communities have been described in the northern forest-tundra in Laya and Pechora river basins (between Naryan-Mar and Telvisochnoe village) (Fig. 1, sites 9, 12).

### **Moehringio lateriflorae–Piceetum obovatae**

**delphinietosum elati O. Lavrinenko subass. nov.** (Table 3, rel. 8–13, Table 4, syntaxon 13; Fig. 2L–2N)

**Holotypus:** Table 3, relevé 12 (author's number CA13), Nenets Autonomus Area, Severnaya River basin, 67.68565°N 54.07136°E, floodplain terrace in a river valley, 16.07.2025, authors O.V. Lavrinenko, D.D. Karsonova.

**Composition.** Differential species combination of the subassociation: shrub *Salix bastata* (2a), herbs *Delphinium elatum*, *Equisetum scirpoides*, *Poa palustris*, bryophytes *Ptilidium ciliare*, *Rhytidiadelphus squarrosus* (1) and *Timmia austriaca* (1).

**Structure.** The total cover in the communities is 100 %, with the mean cover of trees 65 %, shrubs 30 %, dwarf shrubs 30 %, herbs 35 % and mosses 75 %. Cover of lichens are usually from less than 1 %. The communities are species-rich; alpha diversity ranges from 36 to 62 species, averaging 49 species, including 2 trees, 6 shrubs, 1 dwarf shrub, 27 herbs, 10 bryophytes, and 3 lichens. The distinctions of the subassociation communities from the typical variant are: 1) the constant presence of *Salix bastata* in the shrub layer; 2) a rich layer of mesophilic tall herbs (up to 80 cm in height), such as *Aconitum septentrionale*, *Delphinium elatum*, *Saussurea alpina*, *Thalictrum kemense*, *Trollius europaeus*, and *Veratrum lobelianum*, which grow both beneath the shrub canopy and in open glades; 3) a multispecies mosaic moss cover. In addition to the main green moss species, it includes *Barbilophozia hycopodioides*, *Climacium dendroides*, *Dicranum majus*, *Ptilidium ciliare*, *Rhytidiadelphus squarrosus*, and *Timmia austriaca* (the last two species grow predominantly under the canopies of spruce trees).

**Habitats.** Ribbon-like islands on low floodplain terraces within the broad valleys of meandering rivers. Beneath the

**Table 4.** Synoptic table of the syntaxa of *Picea obovata* communities from the forest-tundra and northern taiga of the Euro-pean North-East and in comparison with the 2 communities from the Southern Urals. Number of syntaxon: **All. Empetro hermaphroditum–Piceion obovatae: 1–5** – ass. Empetro hermaphroditum–Piceetum obovatae: **1–4** – subass. typicum; **1** – *Picea obovata*–*Empetrum hermaphroditum*+*Vaccinium myrtillus*+(*Vaccinium vitis-idaea*)–*Pleurozium schreberi* (Katenin 1972), **2** – *Piceetum myrtillosum polare* (Sambuk 1932), **3** – *Picea obovata*–*Hylocomium proliferum* (with *Picea obovata*–*Polytrichum commune* & *Picea obovata*–*Cladonia alpestris*) (Dedov 1940), **4** – according to the authors’ own relevés; **5** – subass. arctoetosum alpinae; **6–11** – ass. *Betula nanae*–*Piceetum obovatae*: **6** – subass. typicum; **7–11** – subass. caricetosum globularis: **7** – *Piceetum nano-betulosum mixtum* (Sambuk 1932), **8** – *Picea obovata*–*Polytrichum commune* (Dedov 1940), **9** – *Picea obovata*–*Betula nana*–*Empetrum hermaphroditum*+*Vaccinium myrtillus*+(*Equisetum sylvaticum*)–*Polytrichum* spp.+*Sphagnum* spp. (Katenin 1972), **10** – *Picea obovata*–*Betula nana*–*Empetrum hermaphroditum*+*Vaccinium myrtillus*+(*Carex globularis*)–*Polytrichum* spp. (Katenin 1972), **11** – *Picea obovata*–*Betula nana*–*Empetrum hermaphroditum*+*Vaccinium myrtillus*–*Pleurozium schreberi* (Katenin 1972). **Suball. Clematido sibiricae–Piceenion obovatae: 12–13** – ass. *Moehringio lateriflorae*–*Piceetum obovatae*: **12** – subass. typicum, **13** – subass. delphinietosum elati; **14–17** – ass. *Aconito septentrionalis*–*Piceetum obovatae*: **14** – subass. cornetosum suecicae, **15** – subass. filipenduletosum ulmariae var. *Anthoxanthum alpinum* (moss-grass and mixed grass spruce forest, Dedov 1940), **16** – subass. typicum (Zaugolnova et al. 2009), **17** – subass. filipenduletosum ulmariae var. *typica* (Zaugolnova et al. 2009). **All. Vaccinio myrtilli–Piceion obovatae prov. 18–19** – relevés of the ass. *Vaccinio myrtilli*–*Piceetum obovatae* var. *typica* & var. *Pinus sylvestris* (Ermakov & Martynenko 2022).

Alliance	Empetro hermaphroditum–Piceion obovatae											Aconito rubicundi–Abietion sibiricae							Vm–Po	
												Clematido sibiricae–Piceenion obovatae								
Suballiance																				
Number of syntaxon	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	
<b>Differential species combination of the Empetro hermaphroditum–Piceion obovatae and Empetro hermaphroditum–Piceetum obovatae</b>																				
<i>Empetrum hermaphroditum</i>	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	IV	V	V	V	II	II	IV	II	.	.	.	1	
<i>Vaccinium uliginosum</i> s. l.	V	III	I	IV	II	V	V	V	V	V	V	IV	III	III	.	.	.	1	1	
<i>Polytrichum commune</i>	V	III	III	III	.	IV	II	V	V	V	V	II	.	IV	III	III	I	1	1	
<i>Avenella flexuosa</i>	V	III	IV	IV	III	II	II	.	V	IV	V	II	I	II	V	.	.	.	.	
<i>Rhododendron tomentosum</i> s. l.	IV	IV	I	I	V	V	V	V	V	IV	IV	.	.	II	.	.	.	.	.	
<i>Nephtura arcticum</i>	V	II	III	.	.	III	V	II	IV	V	V	.	.	II	I	.	.	.	.	
<i>Dicranum majus</i>	.	.	I	IV	IV	IV	I	II	I	.	.	.	V	.	I	.	.	.	.	
<i>Salix phyllifolia</i>	.	.	.	.	.	III	.	.	I	V	V	III	III	IV	III	.	.	.	.	
<b>Differential species combination of the Empetro hermaphroditum–Piceetum obovatae arctoetosum alpinae</b>																				
<i>Arctous alpina</i>	III	.	I	.	V	I	.	.	.	I	III	I	I	.	.	.	.	.	.	
<i>Campanula rotundifolia</i>	.	.	.	I	IV	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	II	.	.	.	.	.	.	
<i>Tanacetum bipinnatum</i>	.	.	.	I	IV	.	.	.	.	.	.	III	V	.	.	.	.	.	.	
<i>Peltigera malacea</i>	II	.	.	I	V	II	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	I	.	.	.	.	.	
<i>Flavocetraria cucullata</i>	.	.	I	.	IV	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	
<i>Koeleria pobleana</i>	.	.	.	.	III	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	
<i>Stereocaulon alpinum</i>	.	.	.	.	III	I	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	
<b>Differential species combination of the Betulo nanae–Piceetum obovatae</b>																				
<i>Betula nana</i>	IV	.	IV	III	IV	V	V	V	V	V	V	IV	I	V	III	.	.	.	.	
<i>Salix glauca</i>	IV	.	.	.	I	V	.	.	II	V	V	II	IV	V	.	.	.	.	.	
<i>Rubus chamaemorus</i>	.	I	.	.	I	IV	V	V	V	IV	III	.	.	IV	.	.	II	.	.	
<i>Sphagnum girgensohnii</i>	.	I	.	.	.	III	II	.	III	II	II	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	
<b>Differential species combination of the Betulo nanae–Piceetum obovatae caricetosum globularis</b>																				
<i>Carex globularis</i>	IV	III	I	.	.	II	V	V	V	V	V	III	.	II	.	.	.	.	.	
<i>Polytrichum strictum</i>	V	II	II	I	I	I	V	IV	V	V	V	I	.	II	III	.	.	.	1	
<i>Eriophorum vaginatum</i>	.	.	.	.	.	.	II	V	III	III	I	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	
<i>Sphagnum capillifolium</i>	.	.	.	.	.	I	IV	.	I	V	II	.	.	.	.	.	.	1	.	
<i>Andromeda polifolia</i> s. l.	.	.	.	.	.	.	III	IV	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	
<i>Dicranum elongatum</i>	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	V	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	
<i>Sphagnum russowii</i>	.	.	.	.	.	I	.	.	IV	II	I	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	
<b>Differential species combination of the Moehringio lateriflorae–Piceetum obovatae</b>																				
<i>Salix lanata</i>	.	.	.	.	.	III	.	.	.	.	.	IV	V	II	.	.	.	.	.	
<i>Moehringia lateriflora</i>	.	.	.	.	I	I	.	.	.	.	.	V	V	II	II	.	.	.	.	
<i>Vicia cracca</i>	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	V	IV	.	.	.	.	.	.	
<i>Geranium albijlorum</i>	.	.	.	.	.	I	.	.	.	.	.	IV	III	I	.	II	III	.	.	
<i>Astragalus subpolaris</i>	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	III	IV	.	.	.	.	.	.	
<i>Primula matthioli</i>	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	III	III	I	.	.	.	.	.	
<b>Differential species combination of the Moehringio lateriflorae–Piceetum obovatae delphinietosum elati</b>																				
<i>Salix hastata</i>	.	.	.	.	.	I	.	.	.	.	.	.	V	II	.	.	.	.	.	
<i>Delphinium elatum</i>	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	V	.	III	.	.	.	.	
<i>Equisetum scirpoides</i>	.	.	.	.	.	II	.	.	.	.	.	.	V	.	.	.	.	.	.	
<i>Rhytidadelphus squarrosus</i>	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	I	IV	.	.	.	.	.	.	
<i>Timmia austriaca</i>	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	IV	.	.	.	.	.	.	
<i>Poa palustris</i>	.	.	.	.	I	II	.	.	.	.	.	.	IV	.	.	.	II	.	.	
<b>Differential species combination of the Aconito septentrionalis–Piceetum obovatae</b>																				
<i>Chamaenerion angustifolium</i>	II	I	I	II	II	II	.	.	.	.	I	V	IV	IV	IV	IV	IV	1	2	
<i>Calamagrostis purpurea</i>	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	I	.	IV	IV	IV	V	.	1	
<i>Thalictrum minus</i> s. l.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	III	III	I	V	I	II	.	.	
<i>Ranunculus propinquus</i>	.	.	.	.	.	I	.	.	.	.	.	I	I	V	.	III	IV	.	.	
<i>Rosa acicularis</i>	IV	II	I	.	.	I	.	I	.	I	.	.	.	.	III	IV	IV	.	.	
<b>Differential species combination of the Aconito septentrionalis–Piceetum obovatae cornetosum suecicae</b>																				
<i>Cornus suecica</i>	.	.	I	.	.	.	.	.	I	.	.	.	.	V	II	.	.	.	.	

Table 4. Continued.

Number of syntaxon	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
<i>Pedicularis lapponica</i>	.	.	I	I	I	III	.	III	.	.	.	.	I	V	.	.	.	.	.
<i>Myosotis palustris</i>	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	IV	.	.	II	.	.
<i>Valeriana capitata</i>	.	.	.	.	.	II	.	.	.	.	.	I	.	IV	II	.	.	.	.
<i>Pyrola minor</i>	.	.	.	.	.	II	.	.	.	.	.	II	I	IV	I	.	.	.	.
<b>Differential species combination of the Aconito septentrionalis–Piceetum obovatae filipenduletosum ulmariae</b>																			
<i>Trollius europaeus</i>	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	III	III	III	IV	I	V	.	.
<i>Filipendula ulmaria</i>	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	IV	II	V	.	.
<i>Ranunculus repens</i>	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	III	I	II	.	.
<i>Vicia sepium</i>	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	II	II	V	I	IV	.	.
<i>Geum rivale</i>	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	III	I	I	IV	.	.
<b>Differential species combination of the Aconito septentrionalis–Piceetum obovatae filipenduletosum ulmariae var. Anthoxanthum alpinum</b>																			
<i>Anthoxanthum alpinum</i>	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	II	V	.	.	.	.
<i>Lathyrus pratensis</i>	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	I	I	I	IV	I	II	.	.
<i>Alchemilla murbeckiana</i>	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	I	III	.	.	.	.
<i>Ribes nigrum</i>	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	III	I	II	.	.
<i>Calamagrostis neglecta</i>	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	I	.	.	III	.	.	.	.
<b>Constant species differentiating the Clematido sibiricae–Piceenion obovatae in the forest-tundra</b>																			
<i>Veronica longifolia</i>	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	V	IV	III	IV	I	II	.	.
<i>Ribes spicatum</i>	.	I	.	I	II	I	.	.	.	.	.	V	V	II	III	.	II	.	.
<i>Viola biflora</i>	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	III	V	IV	III	II	II	.	.
<i>Climacium dendroides</i>	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	III	IV	.	V	.	II	.	.
<i>Saussurea alpina</i>	.	.	.	.	.	I	.	.	.	.	.	I	V	II	V	I	III	.	.
<i>Poa pratensis</i>	.	.	.	.	.	I	.	.	.	.	.	.	III	II	V	.	.	.	.
<b>Differential species combination of the Clematido sibiricae–Piceenion obovatae</b>																			
<i>Veratrum lobelianum</i>	.	.	.	.	.	I	.	.	.	.	.	III	IV	IV	III	V	IV	.	1
<i>Valeriana wolgensis</i>	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	III	III	.	.	IV	III	.	.
<i>Aconitum septentrionale</i>	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	V	III	III	V	V	.	.
<i>Cirsium heterophyllum</i>	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	III	III	II	III	2	1
<i>Clematis sibirica</i>	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	III	IV	III	2	1
<i>Stellaria bungeana</i>	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	III	V	I	1	.
<b>Differential species combination of the Aconito rubicundi–Abietion sibiricae</b>																			
<i>Geranium sylvaticum</i>	.	.	I	.	.	I	.	.	.	.	.	.	III	V	V	IV	IV	2	.
<i>Milium effusum</i>	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	III	III	.	1
<i>Parasenecio hastatus</i>	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	III	III	.	.
<i>Senecio nemorensis</i>	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	III	II	.	1
<i>Crepis sibirica</i>	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	I	II	.	.
<b>Character species of the Piceo obovatae–Pinetalia sibiricae</b>																			
<i>Picea obovata</i>	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	5	5
<i>Abies sibirica</i>	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	V	II	2	5
<i>Calamagrostis obtusata</i>	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	I	II	1	1
<i>Pinus sibirica</i>	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	II	I	.	.
<i>Sorbus sibirica</i>	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	5	5
<i>Cerastium pauciflorum</i>	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	2
<b>Constant species differentiating the Piceenea abietii-obovatae</b>																			
<i>Hylcomiadelpus triquetrus</i>	.	.	I	.	I	.	.	.	.	.	.	V	V	I	V	II	III	.	.
<i>Gymnocarpium dryopteris</i>	.	.	II	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	IV	.	V	IV	2	3
<i>Maianthemum bifolium</i>	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	V	III	5	5
<i>Oxalis acetosella</i>	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	V	V	4	4
<i>Phegopteris connectilis</i>	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	III	II	1	2
<i>Dryopteris expansa</i>	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	III	II	1	3
<i>Athyrium filix-femina</i>	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	II	I	2	2
<i>Diplazium sibiricum</i>	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	V	II	.	.
<i>Dryopteris carthusiana</i>	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	I	II	.	1
<b>Character species of the Vaccinio–Piceetea</b>																			
<i>Betula pubescens</i> (incl. var. <i>pumila</i> )	V	V	IV	III	IV	III	IV	II	V	V	V	III	V	V	V	III	IV	.	.
<i>Pleurozium schreberi</i>	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	IV	V	V	V	V	V	IV	IV	V	V	5	5
<i>Hylcomium splendens</i>	IV	V	V	V	V	V	II	III	II	.	I	V	V	V	V	V	IV	5	5
<i>Vaccinium vitis-idaea</i> s. l.	V	V	V	V	V	V	III	V	V	V	V	IV	V	V	III	I	III	4	1
<i>Vaccinium myrtillus</i>	V	V	III	II	I	IV	V	III	V	V	V	II	V	V	III	III	III	5	5
<i>Juniperus sibirica</i>	IV	I	II	V	V	II	.	.	.	II	III	V	V	V	III	.	.	1	1
<i>Lysimachia europaea</i>	III	.	III	II	I	III	.	II	.	.	.	I	III	V	IV	V	V	4	5
<i>Orthilia secunda</i>	.	.	II	I	.	II	.	.	III	.	I	III	IV	II	IV	II	III	2	.
<i>Peltigera aphthosa</i>	IV	I	II	III	IV	IV	.	III	III	III	.	.	II	III	.	.	.	1	1
<i>Linnæa borealis</i>	II	II	II	IV	I	II	.	.	.	.	.	.	I	II	IV	IV	III	5	5
<i>Ptilium crista-castrensis</i>	.	III	.	I	I	I	.	.	.	.	.	I	.	.	.	IV	III	4	5
<i>Spinulum annotinum</i> (incl. <i>S. subarcticum</i> )	II	III	II	.	I	I	.	II	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	III	I	3	4
<i>Pyrola rotundifolia</i> s. l.	.	.	I	.	I	I	.	III	.	.	.	IV	V	I	II	I	II	2	1
<i>Lonicera pallasii</i>	.	.	I	II	II	.	.	.	.	.	.	V	V	II	V	.	III	.	.
<i>Moneses uniflora</i>	.	.	.	.	.	I	.	.	.	.	.	III	III	.	.	I	II	1	.
<i>Sorbus aucuparia</i>	.	II	I	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	II	II	V	III	.	.
<i>Melampyrum sylvaticum</i>	.	.	II	.	.	.	.	II	.	.	.	.	.	IV	III	.	.	.	.
<i>Dicranum scoparium</i>	II	.	I	.	.	.	.	.	I	.	I	.	II	III	.	III	II	5	5
<i>Dicranum polysetum</i>	.	II	I	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	3	1
<i>Lycopodium clavatum</i> s. l.	II	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	II	.	.	.	2	1
<i>Juniperus communis</i>	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	I	1	1
<b>Other species</b>																			
<i>Cladonia arbuscula</i>	V	V	III	II	V	II	V	IV	V	V	V	.	.	II	II	.	.	1	1

Table 4. Continued.

Number of syntaxon	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
<i>Cladonia stellaris</i>	III	V	II	.	I	I	V	.	III	V	V	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
<i>Cladonia rangiferina</i>	V	V	IV	.	IV	III	V	V	V	V	V	.	.	II	I	.	.	2	2
<i>Stereocaulon paschale</i>	III	.	II	.	II	II	.	.	.	II	III	.	.	I	.	.	.	.	.
<i>Anulacomnium palustre</i>	III	.	II	.	.	II	.	III	V	III	IV	.	.	II	.	.	.	.	.
<i>Cladonia gracilis</i> subsp. <i>elongata</i>	V	II	II	.	V	II	IV	V	IV	V	V	.	.	II	II	.	.	.	.
<i>Rubus arcticus</i>	IV	.	IV	.	II	V	.	.	II	II	III	III	II	V	IV	II	III	.	.
<i>Solidago virgaurea</i> (incl. <i>S. lapponica</i> )	III	.	III	I	III	II	.	.	.	I	III	V	V	V	V	III	IV	4	5
<i>Equisetum sylvaticum</i>	II	V	II	.	I	I	II	III	V	IV	IV	.	.	V	IV	III	IV	3	1
<i>Equisetum arvense</i>	.	.	IV	I	II	III	.	.	.	.	.	III	V	V	V	.	.	.	.
<i>Ptilidium ciliare</i>	.	.	III	V	V	I	.	V	.	.	.	I	V	I	.	.	.	.	.
<i>Festuca ovina</i>	.	.	III	V	V	I	.	.	.	.	.	V	V	.	III	.	.	.	.
<i>Luzula pilosa</i>	.	I	IV	.	.	.	.	II	.	.	.	.	.	I	III	II	III	4	5
<i>Samolium uncinata</i>	.	.	.	IV	V	I	.	III	.	.	I	IV	V	I	.	II	III	2	3
<i>Equisetum pratense</i>	.	.	.	II	I	V	.	.	.	.	.	IV	V	III	I	III	IV	.	.
<i>Barbilophozia lycopodioides</i> ect.	I	.	.	II	II	I	.	.	V	V	III	.	V	.	.	II	II	.	.
<i>Galium boreale</i>	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	V	V	I	V	II	IV	2	.
<i>Adoxa moschatellina</i>	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	II	V	III	I	III	III	.	.
<i>Cetraria islandica</i> s. l.	.	.	I	.	IV	II	.	IV	.	II	II	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
<i>Cladonia coccifera</i>	.	III	III	.	III	I	II	II	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
<i>Cladonia cornuta</i>	.	.	.	II	III	II	.	.	III	III	III	.	I	IV	.	.	.	.	.
<i>Cladonia uncialis</i>	II	.	I	I	II	I	.	.	.	II	III	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
<i>Polytrichum juniperinum</i>	.	.	II	I	III	I	.	.	.	.	.	I	II	.	.	.	.	1	.
<i>Cladonia maxima</i>	.	.	.	I	III	II	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	I	.	.	.	.	.
<i>Cladonia stygia</i>	.	.	.	I	III	III	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
<i>Cladonia amaurocraea</i>	.	.	.	.	III	I	.	.	.	.	I	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
<i>Cladonia chlorophaea</i>	.	.	.	.	III	I	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	II	.	.	.	.	.
<i>Peltigera didactyla</i>	.	.	.	.	III	I	.	.	.	.	.	I	I	.	.	.	.	.	.
<i>Equisetum palustre</i>	.	.	.	.	.	III	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	II	.	.
<i>Bistorta elliptica</i>	II	.	.	.	.	III	.	.	II	I	.	.	I	.	.	II	.	.	1
<i>Petasites frigidus</i>	.	.	.	.	.	I	.	III	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
<i>Cladonia deformis</i>	III	.	I	.	I	I	.	.	II	V	V	.	.	I	.	.	.	.	.
<i>Peltigera polydactylon</i>	.	.	I	.	I	I	.	.	V	II	IV	.	.	I	.	.	.	.	.
<i>Peltigera scabrosa</i>	II	.	I	.	I	III	.	.	I	III	III	II	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
<i>Cladonia cyanipes</i>	.	.	.	.	I	I	.	.	III	II	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
<i>Salix lapponum</i>	.	I	I	.	.	.	I	.	.	III	I	.	.	.	II	.	.	.	.
<i>Dicranum</i> sp.	V	.	I	.	.	.	.	.	V	III	V	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
<i>Achillea millefolium</i>	.	.	.	.	II	.	.	.	.	.	.	III	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
<i>Cladonia fimbriata</i>	.	.	.	II	I	.	.	.	.	.	.	I	V	II	.	.	.	.	.
<i>Mnium spinosum</i>	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	III	.	.	II	I	.	.
<i>Brachythecium erythrorrhizon</i>	.	.	.	III	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	III	.	.	II	.	.	.
<i>Ranunculus monophyllus</i>	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	III	I	.	.	.	.	.
<i>Cladonia ochrochlora</i>	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	III	.	.	.	.	.
<i>Cladonia sulphurina</i>	.	.	.	I	I	I	.	.	.	.	.	.	I	III	.	.	.	.	.
<i>Sibirotrisetum sibiricum</i> s. l.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	II	.	III	.	.	.	.
<i>Festuca rubra</i> s. l.	III	I	.	.	II	I	.	.	.	.	I	.	I	I	III	.	.	.	.
<i>Sphagnum</i> sp.	II	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	IV	.	.	.	.	.
<i>Paris quadrifolia</i>	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	IV	II	.	.
<i>Rhodobryum roseum</i>	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	IV	III	.	.
<i>Chrysosplenium alternifolium</i>	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	IV	V	.	.
<i>Rhytidadelphus subpinnatus</i>	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	III	I	.	.
<i>Viola epipsila</i>	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	II	III	.	.
<i>Alchemilla</i> sp.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	I	III	.	.
<i>Rubus idaeus</i>	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	V	III	2	4
<i>Rubus saxatilis</i>	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	II	.	III	IV	3	2
<i>Sciuroidium reflexum</i>	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	II	.	.	III	I	1	2
<i>Melica nutans</i>	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	II	II	2	2
<i>Elymus caninus</i>	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	II	III	.	1
<i>Angelica sylvestris</i>	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	III	.	.	.
<i>Lathyrus vernus</i>	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	III	1	.
<i>Calamagrostis arundinacea</i>	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	5	5
<i>Betula pendula</i>	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	5	4
<i>Pinus sylvestris</i>	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	5	1
<i>Carex digitata</i>	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1	5
<i>Hieracium subpellucidum</i>	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	2	3
<i>Melampyrum pratense</i>	.	II	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	II	.	.	.	3	1
<i>Hyperzia selago</i>	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	I	.	.	.	2	2
<i>Carex pilosa</i>	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	2	1
<i>Goodyera repens</i>	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	2	1
<i>Fragaria vesca</i>	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	II	I	2	1
<i>Quercus robur</i>	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	2	1
<i>Sanguisorba officinalis</i>	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	2	1
<i>Tilia cordata</i>	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	2	1
<i>Veronica officinalis</i>	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	2	1
<i>Succisa pratensis</i>	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	2	1
<i>Dicranum fuscescens</i>	.	.	I	.	I	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	I	II	2	1
<i>Rabeiera holostea</i>	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	II	II	1	2
<i>Hieracium albocostatum</i>	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1	2
<i>Crepis paludosa</i>	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	I	II	1	1
<i>Larix sibirica</i>	.	.	.	I	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1	1
<i>Diphysastrum complanatum</i>	.	II	II	.	I	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1	1
<i>Plagiommium cuspidatum</i>	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1	1

Note. Other species with constancy only I and II and also those found only in 1 relevés of the ass. Vaccinio myrtilli–Piceetum obovatae are not included in the table. Differential species combination are indicated by frames around the values. Bold type indicates high abundance (2b and more in Braun-Blanquet scale, 3 and more in Drude scale).

communities are rich alluvial humus and alluvial humus gley soils (Fig. 2N).

**Distribution.** Communities have been described in the northern forest-tundra within the basins of the Ortina and Laya rivers (sites 10, 11).

A portion of dwarf shrub-green moss spruce open woodlands with a dense or sparse shrub layer, including *Lonicera pallasii* and *Ribes spicatum*, and some herbs (e.g., *Calamagrostis purpurea*, *Chamaenerion angustifolium*), are confined to the lower parts of slopes on high river valley banks. These communities exhibit characteristics (particularly species from diagnostic combinations) inherent to both the ass. *Betula nanae*–*Piceetum obovatae* and the associations of the suballiance *Clematido sibiricae*–*Piceenion obovatae*. We have chosen to retain these descriptions in the table (Table 2, relevés 27–33) but have designated them as transitional communities.

In the northern and middle taiga forests of eastern European Russia, the ass. *Aconito septentrionalis*–*Piceetum obovatae* Zaugolnova et Morozova in Morozova 2025 has the widest distribution compared to other associations of the suballiance *Clematido sibiricae*–*Piceenion obovatae*. The diagnostic species of the association are: *Aconitum septentrionale*, *Veratrum lobelianum*, *Calamagrostis purpurea*, *Chamaenerion angustifolium* from the group of boreal tall herbs, as well as *Ranunculus propinquus* and *Rosa acicularis* (Zaugolnova et al. 2009). Typical habitats for these tall herb dark-coniferous and derived (secondary) small-leaved forests are river floodplains and slopes of river terraces with well-moistened and moderately drained soils.

In the southern forest-tundra adjacent to the Malozemelskaya tundra, we have described two subassociations of this association, one of which is new.

***Aconito septentrionalis*–*Piceetum obovatae* cornetosum suecicae O. Lavrinenko subass. nov.** (Table 3, rel. 14–21, Table 4, syntaxon 14; Fig. 2O–2P)

**Holotypus:** Table 3, relevé 18 (author's number C102), Nenets Autonomous Area, forest-tundra on the border with the Malozemelskaya Tundra, 67.57889°N 49.50892°E, high floodplain terrace of an unnamed tributary of the Bolshaya Mutnaya River, spruce-birch open woodland with a shrub layer of dwarf birch and willows, and a moss-dwarf shrub-herbaceous ground cover, 02.07.2006, author O.V. Lavrinenko.

**Composition.** Compared to the subass. *typicum*, this subassociation is impoverished in species of tall herbs from the diagnostic combinations of the association, the suballiance *Clematido sibiricae*–*Piceenion obovatae*, and the alliance *Aconito rubicundi*–*Abietion sibiricae*. Only the principal species are constantly or frequently present: *Aconitum septentrionale*, *Calamagrostis purpurea* (1), *Chamaenerion angustifolium*, *Cirsium heterophyllum*, *Geranium sylvaticum* (1), *Ranunculus propinquus* and *Veratrum lobelianum*. The subassociation is distinguished by the presence of the following differential species combination: *Cornus suecica* (2a), *Rubus chamaemorus*, *Pedicularis lapponica*, *Myosotis palustris*, and *Valeriana capitata*. Total number of taxa registered in subassociation is 110: 75 vascular plants (2 trees, 10 shrubs, 8 dwarf shrubs, and 55 herbs), 12 bryophytes and 23 lichens.

**Structure.** The total cover in the communities is 100 %, with the mean cover of trees 40 %, shrubs 35 %, dwarf shrubs 30 %, herbs 30 %, mosses 40 % and lichens 1 %. Alpha diversity ranges from 34 to 57 species, averaging is

49, including 2 trees, 6 shrubs, 5 dwarf shrubs, 24 herbs, 5 bryophytes and 7 lichens. Tree cover varies significantly (20–60 %). It is codominated by *Betula pubescens* var. *pumila* and *Picea obovata*, but birch is usually more abundant. Spruce reaches a height of 14 m, birch – 8 m. Spruce crowns are conical, often with flag-like top and dying branches. Birch exhibits a skirt-shaped growth form: a bushy "skirt" several meters in diameter is formed up to the snow cover height, above which only a few crooked trunks grow. Typically, a well-developed shrub layer 70–150 (200) cm tall is present, with cover reaching 60 %. It consists of *Betula nana*, *Salix glauca*, and *Juniperus sibirica*, with a mix of *Lonicera pallasii*, *Ribes spicatum*, *Salix phylicifolia*, *Sorbus aucuparia* and *Spiraea media*. The herb-dwarf shrub layer is also well-developed, with 40–80 % cover and high species diversity. The greatest abundance in the upper sublayer is achieved by tall herbs such as *Geranium sylvaticum*, *Calamagrostis purpurea*. In the lower sublayer, *Vaccinium myrtillus* and *Cornus suecica* codominate. The ground cover has varying degrees of closure (from 10 to 80 %) and is primarily composed of green mosses with a mix of *Polytrichum commune* and *Sphagnum* spp.

**Habitats.** Spruce-birch forests and open woodlands of the tall herb-dwarf shrub (*Vaccinium myrtillus* and *Cornus suecica*)-green moss type occupy gentle slopes of hills and ridges in watershed areas, less frequently the upper parts of gentle slopes on river terraces within river and stream valleys.

**Distribution.** Communities have been described in the northern and southern forest-tundra adjacent to the Malozemelskaya tundra, in the vicinity of Bolshoe Leisato Lake, Lysuteito Lake, and within the basin of the Bolshaya Mutnaya River (sites 2, 3, 5).

In the forest-tundra areas adjacent to the Malozemelskaya tundra and geographically close to our study sites, Dedov conducted fieldwork in 1928–1931, producing relevés of moss-herb spruce forests and herb-rich spruce forests. The communities he described have been identified by us as the subass. *Aconito septentrionalis*–*Piceetum obovatae* *filipenduletosum ulmariae* Zaugolnova, Smirnova, Braslavskaja, Degteva, Prokasina et Lugovaya in Morozova 2025. Characteristic features of the such herb-rich spruce forests are not only species from the diagnostic combination of the association, suballiance and alliance, but also the hygro-mesophilic herbs of the diagnostic combination for the subassociation: *Filipendula ulmaria*, *Geum rivale*, *Ranunculus repens*, *Trollius europaea*, and also *Vicia sepium*.

We present Dedov's relevés at the rank of a variant of the subass. *filipenduletosum ulmariae* – var. *Anthoxanthum alpinum* (Table 3, rel. 22–28, Table 4, syntaxon 15). In contrast to the spruce-birch forests and open woodlands of the var. *typica*, described in the northern and middle taiga (Zaugolnova et al. 2009: 10–15, Table 3; see also Table 4, syntaxon 17 in this paper), many boreal species (*Lathyrus vernus*, *Maianthemum bifolium*, *Melica nutans*, *Milium effusum*, *Oxalis acetosella*, *Parasenecio hastatus*, *Rubus saxatilis*, *Senecio nemorensis*) are absent from the forest-tundra communities of this subassociation. At the same time, herbs such as *Alchemilla murbeckiana*, *Anthoxanthum alpinum*, *Avenella flexuosa*, *Calamagrostis neglecta*, *Lathyrus pratensis*, and others are present. This combination of characteristics allowed them to be described as a more northern variant. The communities of this variant are characterized by high vitality of spruce (cover 40–70 %, height 8–12 m, healthy regeneration), the participation of birch in the tree stand, a dense and diverse

undergrowth, a well-developed herb layer (cover 30–70 %) that includes tall herbs and grasses, and the near absence of dwarf shrubs and lichens. The herb layer is up to 60 cm tall, with the greatest abundance of *Calamagrostis purpurea*, *Equisetum arvense* s. l., *Filipendula ulmaria*, *Geranium sylvaticum*, *Poa pratensis* and *Thalictrum kemense*. The moss cover varies (from rare patches to 75 %); besides *Hylocomium splendens* and *Pleurozium schreberi*, *Climacium dendroides* and *Hylocomiadelphus triquetrus* are also significant. Average number of species in the community is 41, including 2 trees, 6 shrubs, 2 dwarf shrub, 25 herbs, 5 bryophytes and 1 lichen. Communities occur primarily in river floodplains and the lower parts of riverside slopes in drained and moist habitats with alluvial soils, less frequently away from rivers (Dedov 2006). They have been described in the forest-tundra of the northern part of the Timan Ridge (Fig. 1, site 1) and in areas adjacent to the Malozemelskaya tundra (sites 4, 6, 7).

## DISCUSSION

In the modern classification system adopted in the EuroVegChecklist (Mucina et al. 2016), taiga dark-coniferous forests of the class Vaccinio–Piceetea include two orders: the European Piceetalia excelsae and the Ural-Siberian Piceo obovatae–Pinetalia sibiricae, the latter also partially extending into the northeastern European taiga (Ermakov & Martynenko 2022, Ermakov 2025). There is no clear-cut geographical boundary between the orders' ranges. Instead, there is a transitional zone that also encompasses our study area in the forest-tundra of the European northeast as well. Although the associations we describe lack the main diagnostic species of Piceo obovatae–Pinetalia sibiricae: *Abies sibirica*, *Pinus sibirica*, *Calamagrostis obtusata*, *Cerastium pauciflorum* (Ermakov 2013, 2025), it is correct to assign them to this order because the communities are described within the range of *Picea obovata* (which forms the northern tree line), not *Picea abies*. A characteristic feature of the spruce open woodlands in the forest-tundra of the European northeast is the constant mix of only *Betula pubescens* var. *pumila*. In contrast, *Abies sibirica* is a constant admixture to spruce in the northern taiga subzone, while *Pinus sibirica* occurs in low abundance only in the Pre-Ural part of this subzone, as noted already by Sambuk (1932:153).

The extremely northern spruce open woodlands of the associations and subassociations we describe are impoverished in many boreal species whose ranges are limited to the taiga zone. Some species characteristic of taiga communities in the class Vaccinio–Piceetea are consistently absent or occur only rarely (see Table 4). The communities of *Picea obovata* in the forest-tundra also almost entirely lack species of the subclass Piceenea abieti-obovatae Ermakov 2025. This subclass was delineated based on the commonality of dark-coniferous forests across Northern Eurasia due to the presence of many southern boreal species, such as *Athyrium filix-femina*, *Diplazium sibiricum*, *Dryopteris carthusiana*, *D. expansa*, *Gymnocarpium dryopteris*, *Maianthemum bifolium*, *Oxalis acetosella*, and *Phegopteris connectilis*. The only exception is *Hylocomiadelphus triquetrus*, which is common in forest-tundra tall herb valley spruce forests.

We have assigned the spruce and birch-spruce open woodlands of the forest-tundra to two alliances, whose communities distinctly differ in species composition, structure, and occupied habitats. The first is the alliance Empetro hermaphroditi–Piceion obovatae, which unites communities of open *Picea obovata* and *P. abies* woodlands in the northern taiga and forest-tundra of European Russia, growing under conditions of low temperatures and often elevated (sometimes temporary) moisture. Within this alliance, we have described two associations with their respective subassociations and variants. A portion of the dwarf shrub-green moss spruce open woodlands we described, formed on gentle and flat watershed surfaces with podzolised sandy soils, has been assigned to the previously described subass. Empetro hermaphroditi–Piceetum obovatae typicum. To the same association, but at the rank of a new subassociation – Empetro hermaphroditi–Piceetum obovatae arctoetosum alpinae – we assign the unique dwarf shrub-green moss communities of relict spruce patches in the tundra, isolated from the main treeline, under which buried podzolic soil horizons are often found.

Dwarf shrub-green moss spruce open woodlands with a dense shrub layer (*Betula nana* and *Salix glauca*, less commonly other willows), which occupy gentle slopes of loamy ridges and hills in watershed areas and the upper parts of gentle slopes in river valleys, have been described at the rank of a new association – *Betulo nanae*–Piceetum obovatae – specific to the forest-tundra. Two subassociations have been described: the subass. typicum in well-drained habitats of the northern forest-tundra, and the subass. caricetosum globularis in paludified habitats on watersheds in the southern forest-tundra. Such open woodlands can be identified as shrub (dwarf birch and willow-dwarf birch) tundras with scattered tree outliers. These trees exert a noticeable influence on the vegetation by creating a phytogenic and coenogenic field in the vicinity of their trunks and by introducing forest species into the community composition. The associations described above contain all species of the diagnostic combination for the alliance Empetro hermaphroditi–Piceion obovatae. In the ground cover of these communities, in addition to the main green and polytrichaceous mosses, *Aulacomnium palustre* and the lichens *Cladonia arbuscula*, *C. rangiferina*, *C. stellaris*, and *Stereocaulon paschale* are frequently encountered (see Table 4).

Shrub-herb and herb-rich (with tall herbs) valley spruce forests of the forest-tundra are assigned to the suballiance Clematido sibiricae–Piceion obovatae and to the alliance Aconito rubicundi–Abietion sibiricae. The open woodlands of the forest-tundra are assigned to two associations within this suballiance. A part of the herb-rich spruce and mixed spruce-birch open woodlands of the forest-tundra is assigned to the previously described ass. Aconito septentrionalis–Piceetum obovatae, which is widespread in river floodplains and on river terrace slopes within the northern and middle taiga of eastern European Russia (Zaugolnova et al. 2009). The forest-tundra communities (at the rank of the var. *Anthoxanthum alpinum*) in moist habitats are assigned to the previously

described subass. *filipenduletosum ulmariae*, while those occurring in habitats with good drainage, rich soil conditions, and moderate moisture in river valleys and on hill slopes are described as a new subass. *cornetosum suecicae*.

Another portion of tall herb spruce open woodlands occurs as ribbon-like islands on low riverside terraces of meandering rivers. They are distinguished by a shrub layer of *Salix lanata* and *Juniperus sibirica* with a mix of *Lonicera pallasii* and *Ribes spicatum*, which is often quite dense. These communities are described as a new association, *Moehringio lateriflorae–Piceetum obovatae*, with two subassociations – *typicum* and *delphinietosum elati*.

In contrast to the spruce open woodlands of the alliance *Empetro hermaphroditi–Piceion obovatae*, which inhabit watershed surfaces, the valley spruce and spruce-birch open woodlands of the suballiance *Clematido sibiricae–Piceenion obovatae* are rich in herbaceous species: 19–27 versus 4–9 species in the former. This is explained by more favorable microclimatic conditions, rich alluvial soils, and the absence of permafrost in the river valleys. Along these valleys, many boreal species penetrate northward, forming together with spruce the ribbon-like and island forests in the meanders of rivers flowing from south to north.

Within the northern forest-tundra stripe, we did not encounter the highly paludified spruce forests described in the southern forest-tundra as *Piceeta sphagnosa* (Sambuk 1932) and *Picea obovata–Betula nana–Vaccinium myrtillus+Carex globularis–Sphagnum girgensohnii*, *Picea obovata–Betula nana–Rubus chamaemorus+Carex globularis–Sphagnum capillifolium* (Katenin 1972). This is because, at the northern limit of its range and under permafrost conditions, spruce can only survive and form communities in habitats such as river valleys, sandy soils, or sloping watershed surfaces with relatively well-drained soils. In addition to syntaxa of the alliance *Empetro hermaphroditi–Piceion obovatae*, described in the northern and southern forest-tundra of the Nenets Autonomous Area and the Komi Republic (Table 4, syntaxa 1–11), and syntaxa of the suballiance *Clematido sibiricae–Piceenion obovatae*, described in the same area as well as in the northern and middle taiga of the Komi Republic and Arkhangelsk Region (Table 4, syntaxa 12–17), we have included in the synoptic table two published relevés of the ass. *Vaccinio myrtilli–Piceetum obovatae* Ermakov et Martynenko 2022 (Table 4, syntaxa 18–19). This association belongs to the provisional alliance of the same name, which unites floristically poor, low-productivity spruce-fir and pine-spruce forests with a thick moss cover and domination of dwarf shrubs and boreal small herbs in the herb-dwarf shrub layer. These communities described in the central upland part of the South Urals region on weakly developed, well-drained, nitrogen-poor, acidic soils (Ermakov & Martynenko 2022). Analysis of the table 4 shows that floristic differences between the syntaxa of the three alliances are significant, despite the shared basic characteristic species of the class *Vaccinio–Piceetea* and the dominance of the same species of dwarf shrubs and mosses. The primary distinction is the absence in the open woodlands described in the northern forest-tundra of many

boreal diagnostic species for the higher syntaxa – *Piceenea abieti-obovatae*, *Piceo obovatae–Pinetalia sibiricae*, and *Aconito rubicundi–Abietion sibiricae*. These substantial differences confirmed by the results of the coenoflora analysis (Fig. 3A–D).

Analysis of the coenoflora of vascular plants at the alliance level shows that herbs represent the dominant biomorph in all syntaxa. However, a higher proportion of shrubs is observed in the European northern alliances, and in the alliance *Empetro hermaphroditi–Piceion obovatae*, dwarf shrubs are also more abundant, whereas in the South Urals alliance (*Vaccinio myrtilli–Piceion obovatae* prov. (Ermakov & Martynenko 2022) the proportion of trees is greater (Fig. 3C). In relation to moisture, mesophytes prevail in all syntaxa, yet their greatest share is found in the alliance *Vaccinio myrtilli–Piceion obovatae*. In contrast, the alliance *Empetro hermaphroditi–Piceion obovatae* has more eurytopes and includes mesoxerophytes (Fig. 3B), as part of the spruce open woodlands and patches occur on dry sandy soils.

The geographical analysis confirms the expected patterns: boreal species dominate in the coenofloras of the spruce forests, yet their proportion in the extreme northern syntaxa is 70 %, compared to ~90 % in the South Urals alliance. In the former, 10 % belong to the arctic fraction and 20 % to the hypoarctic fraction, whereas in the latter, hypoarctic species constitute 4 %, and nemoral species are present (7 %) (Fig. 3A). It is logical also that in the northern syntaxa, the largest share is held by species with circumpolar distribution ranges, while in the South Urals association, Eurasian species prevail, and Asian species also appear there (Fig. 3D).

## CONCLUSIONS

The conducted study has enabled a comprehensive characterization of the typological diversity and distribution of spruce open woodlands at their northernmost limit in the European part of Russia. Such research is of critical importance, as the taiga-tundra ecotone represents a key zone where significant transformations in community composition and structure driven by climate warming.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We sincerely thank O.M. Afonina (Komarov Botanical Institute RAS for identifying the collection of mosses and A.I. Grishnyakova for cooperation in the expedition in 2022. The work was carried out within the framework of the scientific project RSF No. 25-26-00373.

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