

## Status of genus *Helvella* (Pezizomycetes, Ascomycota) in Pakistan

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**Purpose:** The order Pezizales is the most diverse group of ascomycetes represented in Pakistan. The Pezizales, the only order of the Pezizomycetes, is characterized by asci that generally open by rupturing to form a terminal lid called operculum. Most of these Ascomycetes are found in Himalayan moist temperate forests which occupy Kashmir, Murree & Hazara hills, Gilgit and Baltistan, lower Dir, upper part of Khurram Agency and some humid areas of upper Swat, because of moisture and dense vegetation cover. *Helvella* belongs to family Helvellaceae which has worldwide distribution comprising of 59 species specifically recognized by the pileus shape which is saddle like. From Pakistan, 11 species of *Helvella* are previously reported from different northern areas of Pakistan. Fruiting bodies of *Helvella* grow above ground generally; have stems and cap which is irregularly shaped.

**Methods:** During present study, by molecular and morphological data, we have described five new species of *Helvella* with their specific location, as the targeted rDNA of the specimen was amplified by using ITS1F and ITS4.

**Results and Conclusions:** The described species are new to science which extended the status of genus *Helvella* in Pakistan. This study suggests that forests of Pakistan are rich in fungal flora and there is need to explore different areas to document and enlist fungi of Pakistan.