



HAL
open science

A Permian nurse log and evidence for facilitation in high-latitude *Glossopteris* forests

Anne-Laure Decombeix, Thibault Durieux, Carla Harper, Rudolph Serbet,
Edith Taylor

► **To cite this version:**

Anne-Laure Decombeix, Thibault Durieux, Carla Harper, Rudolph Serbet, Edith Taylor. A Permian nurse log and evidence for facilitation in high-latitude *Glossopteris* forests. *Lethaia*, 2021, 54 (1), pp.96-105. 10.1111/let.12386 . hal-02569731

HAL Id: hal-02569731

<https://hal.umontpellier.fr/hal-02569731>

Submitted on 3 Dec 2020

HAL is a multi-disciplinary open access archive for the deposit and dissemination of scientific research documents, whether they are published or not. The documents may come from teaching and research institutions in France or abroad, or from public or private research centers.

L'archive ouverte pluridisciplinaire **HAL**, est destinée au dépôt et à la diffusion de documents scientifiques de niveau recherche, publiés ou non, émanant des établissements d'enseignement et de recherche français ou étrangers, des laboratoires publics ou privés.

**This is the peer reviewed version of the following article: Decombeix A-L, Durieux T, Harper CJ, Serbet R & Taylor EL. A Permian nurse log and evidence for facilitation in high-latitude *Glossopteris* forests. *Lethaia*. which has been published in final form at <https://doi.org/10.1111/let.12386>
This article may be used for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Wiley Terms and Conditions for Use of Self-Archived Versions.**

A Permian nurse log and evidence for facilitation in high-latitude *Glossopteris* forests.

Short title: Facilitation in Permian high-latitude forests

Anne-Laure DECOMBEIX, Thibault DURIEUX, Carla J. HARPER, Rudolph SERBET &
Edith L. TAYLOR

Anne-Laure Decombeix [anne-laure.decombeix@cirad.fr] AMAP, Univ Montpellier, CIRAD, CNRS, INRAE, IRD, Montpellier, France; Thibault Durieux [thibault.durieux@etu.umontpellier.fr] AMAP, Univ Montpellier, CIRAD, CNRS, INRAE, IRD, Montpellier, France; Carla J. Harper [charper@tcd.ie] Botany Department, School of Natural Sciences, Trinity College Dublin, Dublin 2, Ireland; Rudolph Serbet [serbet@ku.edu], Division of Paleobotany, Biodiversity Institute, University of Kansas, Lawrence, Kansas, USA; Edith L. Taylor [etaylor@ku.edu], Univ Kansas, Dept of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology, Natural History Museum and Biodiversity Institute, Lawrence, KS 66047 USA; etc.

The biology of trees that grew in high-latitude forests during warmer geological periods is of major interest in understanding past and future ecosystem dynamics. As we study the different plants that composed these forests, it becomes possible to make comparisons with ecosystem processes that occur today. Here we describe a silicified late Permian (Lopingian) glossopterid (seed fern) trunk from Skaar Ridge, central Transantarctic Mountains, Antarctica, with evidence of glossopterid rootlets growing into its wood. The specimen is interpreted as a nurse log similar to those seen in some extant forests. Together with evidence of glossopterid roots growing within the lacunae of older roots, this new specimen suggests the existence of facilitative interactions among the glossopterid trees that dominated the high-latitude forests of Gondwana during the late Permian. More generally, the existence of self-facilitation might

***This is the peer reviewed version of the following article: Decombeix A-L, Durieux T, Harper CJ, Serbet R & Taylor EL. A Permian nurse log and evidence for facilitation in high-latitude Glossopteris forests. Lethaia. which has been published in final form at <https://doi.org/10.1111/let.12386>
This article may be used for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Wiley Terms and Conditions for Use of Self-Archived Versions.***

have favoured the expansion of glossopterids within various environments, especially those at high paleolatitudes, during the Permian icehouse to greenhouse transition.

This is the peer reviewed version of the following article: Decombeix A-L, Durieux T, Harper CJ, Serbet R & Taylor EL. A Permian nurse log and evidence for facilitation in high-latitude Glossopteris forests. Lethaia. which has been published in final form at <https://doi.org/10.1111/let.12386> This article may be used for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Wiley Terms and Conditions for Use of Self-Archived Versions.

Large woody debris in the form of tree stumps, fallen trunks, large branches and roots make up 5–15% of plant biomass in extant natural forests. They serve as habitat and a source of nutrients for a variety of organisms (Harmon *et al.* 1986). In particular, they offer a specific microhabitat that facilitates the germination and growth of seedlings of certain species of trees (“nurse log” interaction, Fig. 1A-C). Fossils of young roots that were growing into wood have been reported from Paleozoic and younger deposits. Fairon-Demaret *et al.* (2003) described, for example, rootlets growing inside conifer trunks in a 55 Ma old *in situ* forest in Belgium. Césari *et al.* (2010, 2012) reported a similar situation in a much older, ca. 300 Ma old, *in situ* forest in Argentina. Both forests were monospecific and grew on periodically waterlogged soils (Fairon-Demaret *et al.* 2003; Césari *et al.* 2010, 2012). This evidence indicates that the evolution of the nurse log syndrome and its paleoenvironmental contexts can be studied in the fossil record. One of the limitations to this type of investigation, however, is that root anatomy is very conservative. This makes it challenging to assess the exact affinities of the fossil roots unless there is evidence that only one taxon was present, i.e., *in situ* monospecific forests, such as those mentioned above. It is especially challenging in the case of roots with little or no secondary growth that cannot be identified based on wood characters. As a result, the affinities of most of the plants that produced the roots seen in fossil wood specimens remain unknown.

During the Permian, the warming of the global climate from icehouse to extreme hothouse conditions allowed trees to colonize high latitudes and establish forests well beyond the polar circle (Taylor *et al.* 2000; Cantrill & Poole 2012). Fossils from these regions yield insights into the diversity and biology of the trees growing in these ecosystems with no modern analogue, i.e., warm polar forests with a strongly seasonal light regime (e.g., Creber 1990; Francis 1994; Taylor & Ryberg 2007; Gulbranson *et al.* 2014; Slater *et al.* 2015; Miller

This is the peer reviewed version of the following article: Decombeix A-L, Durieux T, Harper CJ, Serbet R & Taylor EL. A Permian nurse log and evidence for facilitation in high-latitude Glossopteris forests. Lethaia. which has been published in final form at <https://doi.org/10.1111/let.12386> This article may be used for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Wiley Terms and Conditions for Use of Self-Archived Versions.

et al. 2016). In the Late Permian, the high-latitude forests of the Southern Hemisphere were largely dominated by trees belonging to an extinct order of seed plants, the Glossopteridales (Cúneo *et al.* 1993; Anderson *et al.* 1999; Taylor *et al.* 2009). Glossopterid trees produced very distinctive roots assigned to the genus *Vertebraria* Royle that are characterized by wood with conspicuous lacunae formed by a discontinuous cambium in the first seasons of growth (Neish *et al.* 1993; Decombeix *et al.* 2009). This unusual anatomical feature has important functional implications (Decombeix & Rowe 2018) and makes glossopterid roots very easy to recognize from those of any other plant if wood is present.

Here we illustrate young glossopterid roots growing through the wood of an older glossopterid trunk. Combined with previous evidence of glossopterid roots growing in the lacunae of older roots, this new fossil suggests the existence of facilitation mechanisms between glossopterids trees growing at a same locality. We discuss the possible advantages of this type of interaction in the high-latitude forests of the Permian of Gondwana.

Material and Methods

The specimen described in this paper is preserved in permineralized peat collected from Skaar Ridge, Beardmore Glacier area, central Transantarctic Mountains, Antarctica (84° 49'19.10S, 163° 20'28.00E; elevation: 2289 m; Fig. 2A). The plant remains found in the peat blocks are largely dominated by glossopterid organs. Wood, bark, *Vertebraria* roots, and *Glossopteris* leaves are the most common. The permineralized peat occurs within the Buckley Formation, which also includes sandstones, siltstones, shales, and coals that were deposited in braided stream systems. The formation is considered to be late Permian (Lopingian) in age, based on palynomorphs and associated compression fossils (Farabee *et al.* 1991). At the time,

***This is the peer reviewed version of the following article: Decombeix A-L, Durieux T, Harper CJ, Serbet R & Taylor EL. A Permian nurse log and evidence for facilitation in high-latitude Glossopteris forests. Lethaia. which has been published in final form at <https://doi.org/10.1111/let.12386>
This article may be used for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Wiley Terms and Conditions for Use of Self-Archived Versions.***

the Beardmore Glacier area was located well within the southern polar circle, at an estimated paleolatitude of around 75° S (Torvisk & Cocks 2013, Fig. 2B).

The specimen was cut into three slabs and 11 thin-sections were prepared from one of them at UMR AMAP, Montpellier, following the standard method (Hass & Rowe 1999). Images were taken using ArchiMed software (Microvision Instruments, Evry, France) with Sony XCD-U100CR digital cameras attached to an Olympus SZX12 stereomicroscope and to an Olympus BX51 compound microscope. Figs. 3A and 3B were created from six to ten photos using the focus-stacking feature in ArchiMed.. Figs. 4A and 4B are focused stacks of four photos each, also processed in ArchiMed. Images of extant nurse logs (Fig. 1) were taken with a Canon PowerShot A1000 IS. Plates were composed with Adobe Photoshop version 21.0.1 (Adobe Systems, San José, California, USA). Transformations made in Photoshop included cropping, rotation, and adjustment of exposure, contrast, and colour balance when needed. The specimen and corresponding slides are housed in the Division of Paleobotany collections, Biodiversity Institute, University of Kansas, Lawrence, under specimen number #17,918 and slide accession numbers 30,762–30,772.

Description

General aspect

The preserved portion of the trunk is about 5 cm in diameter and 7 cm long. The central part is not present and the configuration of the rings indicates that the specimen represents the outer part of a larger trunk (Fig. 3A), with a diameter that can be estimated from the direction of tracheid files to be over 20 cm. The fossil trunk is covered on one side by a thin layer of plant fragments, including at least one *Vertebraria* root (Fig. 3B).

***This is the peer reviewed version of the following article: Decombeix A-L, Durieux T, Harper CJ, Serbet R & Taylor EL. A Permian nurse log and evidence for facilitation in high-latitude Glossopteris forests. Lethaia. which has been published in final form at <https://doi.org/10.1111/let.12386>
This article may be used for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Wiley Terms and Conditions for Use of Self-Archived Versions.***

Longitudinal sections through the trunk show several small roots coming from this layer and penetrating the wood of the trunk (Fig. 3B, 3D, 3F). In transverse section, numerous rootlets are visible (Fig. 3A, 3C, 3E). They are mostly found close to the boundary of growth rings. In some cases, several rootlets are present in a hole with a relatively clearly delimited border that might be a gallery created by arthropods, fungi, or previous roots (e.g. Fig. 3C, Fig. 3E, left; Fig. 4H). In most cases, however, the close association of the rootlet tissues with those of the trunk and the distortion and compression of the trunk's wood around the roots indicate that they are growing in the confines of the wood tissue, compressing it laterally as they grow (e.g., Fig. 3C, Fig. 3E, right; Fig. 4C–G).

Trunk anatomy and affinities

The wood is composed of tracheids and parenchymatous rays. Several conspicuous growth ring boundaries can be observed, each marked by a very small number of cells with a smaller radial diameter (Fig. 3A, 3E, 4B). Six rings are preserved; they range 5–10 mm in width. Tracheids are square to polygonal in transverse section, 22–44 μm in radial diameter and 21.5–38.5 μm in tangential diameter ($n=30$) (Fig. 3A). In tangential section, rays are uniseriate and low, 1–6 cells high; individual ray cells measure $20\text{--}32 \times 9\text{--}19 \mu\text{m}$ ($n=30$). In radial section, tracheid walls have multiseriate circular to oval bordered pits 2.7–7 μm in diameter that can be in an alternate or opposite arrangement, or, in some cases, form groups of a few pits (Fig. 4A, 4B). This wood anatomy with distinct growth rings, square to rectangular tracheids in transverse section, small uniseriate rays, a mixed pitting (alternate, opposite, and in groups), and small crowded cross-field pits is typical of the morphogenus *Australoxylon* (Marguerier 1973). Based on the similarity of the wood with other trunks (Decombeix *et al.* 2010: fig. 4C, 2016: fig. 2E–H) and still more with large *Vertebraria* roots (Decombeix *et al.*

***This is the peer reviewed version of the following article: Decombeix A-L, Durieux T, Harper CJ, Serbet R & Taylor EL. A Permian nurse log and evidence for facilitation in high-latitude Glossopteris forests. Lethaia. which has been published in final form at <https://doi.org/10.1111/let.12386>
This article may be used for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Wiley Terms and Conditions for Use of Self-Archived Versions.***

2009: fig. 3D, F) from the same locality, we infer this is a glossopterid trunk. *Australoxylon*-type wood has also been described for *Vertebraria* roots and associated trunks from other localities of Gondwana (Weaver *et al.* 1997 and references therein).

Rootlet anatomy and affinities

The rootlets range in size from less than 200 μm to a few millimetres in diameter (Figs. 3, 4C–G). They commonly have only primary growth and show various protoxylem configurations with 2–6 protoxylem strands (Fig. 4C–G). The inner part of the cortex of the young roots is absent in many specimens and might correspond to an aerenchymatous layer. The outer cortex is composed of 3–5 layers of well-preserved parenchyma cells. A small number of roots produce some wood and show the conspicuous star-shape of young *Vertebraria* roots with secondary growth (Fig. 4G), indicating that at least some, if not all of the rootlets belong to glossopterids.

Fungal activity

The trunk contains a few decay pockets (Fig. 4H “P”) that are lenticular, spindle-shaped to lacrimiform. They are relatively small 8–420 μm in transverse section and 180–900 μm in longitudinal section. There are no cellular contents or fungal remains within the pockets. A few vegetative hyphae are scattered throughout the wood. The hyphae are 0.7–4 μm thick, irregularly septate, typically straight but form cruciform to Y-branching (Fig. 4I–J). There are small spherical bodies ca. 5 μm in diameter that co-occur with the hyphae and may be fungal spores, small tyloses, or preservational artefacts (Fig. 4I). Although the pockets are smaller, their shape and associated fungal remains are like the white pocket rot described in

***This is the peer reviewed version of the following article: Decombeix A-L, Durieux T, Harper CJ, Serbet R & Taylor EL. A Permian nurse log and evidence for facilitation in high-latitude Glossopteris forests. Lethaia. which has been published in final form at <https://doi.org/10.1111/let.12386>
This article may be used for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Wiley Terms and Conditions for Use of Self-Archived Versions.***

other glossopterid specimens from Skaar Ridge (15–18 mm in diameter) (Stubblefield & Taylor 1986; Harper *et al.* 2017).

Discussion

Nurse log

The presence in Antarctic deposits of glossopterids trunks up to 50–60 cm in diameter indicate that at least some representatives of this genus were relatively large trees, with reconstructed heights of 20–30 meters (e.g., Cantrill & Poole 2012; Gulbranson *et al.* 2012; Miller *et al.* 2016). The unusual secondary growth of the roots allows their affinities to be determined easily, making it possible to study the taxa involved in plant-plant interactions even on autochthonous fossils, such as those from Skaar Ridge. We interpret the presence of *Vertebraria* roots growing in the trunk as evidence that it acted as a nurse log for young glossopterids. Today, this type of interaction is important for the establishment of tree seedlings in boreal (Hofgaard 1993), temperate (Christie & Armesto 2003; Harmon & Franklin 1989; Lusk & Ogden 1992), and tropical forests (Lack 1991; Sanchez *et al.* 2009). The *Picea sitchensis*-*Tsuga heterophylla* temperate rainforests of the Olympic Peninsula, Washington state, USA, represent an extreme example with 88–97% of the tree seedlings growing on such logs (McKee *et al.* 1982) (Fig. 1A, 1C). Other cases in which the seedlings of canopy trees establish preferentially on wood have been reported in temperate forests of New Zealand (e.g., Lusk & Ogden 1992), in South American *Nothofagus* forests (e.g., Veblen *et al.* 1979), in old growth boreal and sub-alpine forests of Japan (Narukawa *et al.* 2003), and in boreal conifer forests of Sweden (e.g., Hofgaard 1993).

***This is the peer reviewed version of the following article: Decombeix A-L, Durieux T, Harper CJ, Serbet R & Taylor EL. A Permian nurse log and evidence for facilitation in high-latitude Glossopteris forests. Lethaia. which has been published in final form at <https://doi.org/10.1111/let.12386>
This article may be used for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Wiley Terms and Conditions for Use of Self-Archived Versions.***

Because decaying wood is relatively poor in nutrients, several hypotheses have been proposed for the establishment of trees on fallen logs and other coarse woody debris. Possible advantages include the absence of the deep litter layer that could prevent the rooting of seedlings with a small radicle, reduced competition with understory plants (especially for light), absence of soil pathogens, absence of cover seedlings or allelopathic substances produced by other plants, a better aeration in waterlogged areas, a different availability of nutrients and of symbiotic fungi, and a reduced animal browsing (e.g. Harmon & Franklin 1989). Decayed wood also has the ability to store water (Harmon *et al.* 1986). Finally, wood-decaying fungi might also positively influence the establishment of tree seedlings on nurse logs (Fukasawa 2012). It is very likely that the importance of these factors varies between geographic and climatic areas, and between tree taxa. In the *Picea sitchensis-Tsuga heterophylla* temperate rainforests of the Olympic Peninsula mentioned earlier, Harmon and Franklin (1989) showed, for example, that competition with mosses and herbaceous plants on the forest floor was the probable cause of the very high number of tree seedlings growing on woody debris. In Hawaiian montane forests with waterlogged soil, the proportion of young trees established on logs is higher than in better drained sites (Santiago 2000), suggesting that the logs provide better substrate conditions in terms of aeration and/or oxidation-reduction potential. There is also evidence that in waterlogged environments large woody debris can be used by already established trees. For example, tupelos (*Nyssa*) growing in swamps send their roots into decaying logs and stumps, up to 2–3 feet (0.6–0.9 m) above the soil or water level according to Lemon (1945). Although it is impossible to test the different factors that might have influenced their growth, the glossopterid trees from Skaar Ridge were probably growing in a swampy area of the floodplain, which led to the formation of the peat (Taylor *et al.* 1989). Interestingly, the late Carboniferous–early Permian nurse logs described by Cesari *et al.*

***This is the peer reviewed version of the following article: Decombeix A-L, Durieux T, Harper CJ, Serbet R & Taylor EL. A Permian nurse log and evidence for facilitation in high-latitude Glossopteris forests. Lethaia. which has been published in final form at <https://doi.org/10.1111/let.12386>
This article may be used for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Wiley Terms and Conditions for Use of Self-Archived Versions.***

(2010, 2012) occurred in a forest with periodically waterlogged soils and those reported by Fairon-Demaret *et al.* (2003) were growing in a swampy lowland habitat, with irregular events of water stress. The nurse tree syndrome has thus probably occurred through geological time in fossil forests growing in waterlogged conditions. There is, however, a preservation bias towards this type of environment (e.g. Martin-Closas & Gomez 2004), so it is possible that nurse logs existed in other types of forests also.

Despite the presence of fungal hyphae, the good preservation of the wood and the small size of the pocket rot pockets in the trunk compared to other specimens from Skaar Ridge suggest that the wood was in an early stage of decay. This provides evidence that the trunk was not deeply buried in the peat but was still indeed on the surface when it was colonized by the roots. It is also interesting to note that no mycorrhizal fungi were observed in the small rootlets within the nurse log although they are known to occur in the glossopterid roots from Skaar Ridge that grew directly inside the peat (Harper *et al.* 2013). Mycorrhizal colonization is critical for seedling growth, especially under stressful conditions (Smith & Read 2008), and individuals that are unable to form mycorrhizae typically have a higher mortality risk (Onguene & Kuyper 2002). Mycorrhizal fungi can also help young seedlings in nurse logs to extract sufficient nutrients from rotting wood (Harmon *et al.* 1986; Baier *et al.* 2006). A possible explanation for their absence in this case is that the ambient environment in the log may have been too acidic because of the wood-rotting fungi (Mallik 2003); in extant ecosystems, there is evidence that the decay process can soften the wood substrate for root penetration, but also change the pH and nutrient availability (Maser & Trappe 1984; Fukasawa 2012). Alternatively, mycorrhizae may have not established at the time of preservation or were not preserved.

This is the peer reviewed version of the following article: Decombeix A-L, Durieux T, Harper CJ, Serbet R & Taylor EL. A Permian nurse log and evidence for facilitation in high-latitude Glossopteris forests. Lethaia. which has been published in final form at <https://doi.org/10.1111/let.12386> This article may be used for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Wiley Terms and Conditions for Use of Self-Archived Versions.

Other evidence of facilitation between glossopterids

In the permineralized peat from Skaar Ridge and other comparable localities, rootlets are very abundant in the lacunae formed in the wood of older *Vertebraria* specimens (e.g., [McLoughlin 1992: pl. 10 figs 2–5](#); [Decombeix *et al.* 2009: figs. 2G, 8D](#)). These rootlets commonly have only primary growth and cannot be assigned with certainty to the glossopterids. However, as in the trunk described previously, some specimens with secondary growth display the typical *Vertebraria* structure. The fact that the young glossopterid roots are more frequent in the lacunae of older roots than in their wood suggests that the lacunae were easier to grow in and/or provided better conditions in terms of substrate aeration. In any case, this difference supports the observations made on extant plants that the main cause of root growth in coarse woody debris is not the use of nutrients from decaying wood.

[Slater *et al.* \(2015, p. 1454\)](#) noted that “Dense horizontally extensive *Vertebraria* root mats may [also] have helped to stabilise the glossopterid trees in poorly cohesive waterlogged soils by intermeshing with the roots of neighbouring trees.” Our work on the mechanical properties of *Vertebraria* roots indicates that they were probably well adapted for growth and anchoring in a heterogeneous matrix, such as the one formed by a peat rich in old *Vertebraria* roots ([Decombeix & Rowe 2018](#)). Thus, it is possible that the presence of glossopterid roots had positive feedbacks on neighbouring glossopterid trees at two different levels: (1) by helping in soil stabilisation at the scale of the stand and (2) by providing an ideal substrate for the development of new rootlets. This type of positive niche construction is, for example, also observed among Salicaceae growing in extant riparian ecosystems ([Corenblit *et al.* 2018](#)).

Facilitation between glossopterid trees and the high latitude environment

**This is the peer reviewed version of the following article: Decombeix A-L, Durieux T, Harper CJ, Serbet R & Taylor EL. A Permian nurse log and evidence for facilitation in high-latitude *Glossopteris* forests. *Lethaia*. which has been published in final form at <https://doi.org/10.1111/let.12386>
This article may be used for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Wiley Terms and Conditions for Use of Self-Archived Versions.**

Facilitative interactions are encounters between organisms that benefit at least one of the participants and cause harm to neither (Stachowicz 2001). In extant ecosystems, facilitation increases with increasing stress and appears particularly important at upper physiological limits (e.g., Choler *et al.* 2001; Callway *et al.* 2002; He *et al.* 2013; Anthelme *et al.* 2014). Facilitation may, in some cases, ease range expansion and it might have favoured the expansion of glossopterids across Gondwana during the Permian, including the rapid colonisation of high-latitude environments following the late Paleozoic deglaciation (Isbell & Cúneo 1996).

To date two morphospecies of *Glossopteris* leaves have been recognized in the peat from Skaar Ridge, *G. skaarensis* and *G. schopfii*, suggesting the presence of at least two “whole-plant” species (Pigg 1990). Other organs are more difficult to segregate into multiple species and the number of glossopterid species that produced the *Vertebraria* roots observed in the peat and woody debris remains uncertain. There is, however, enough evidence to support facilitation among glossopterid taxa, at a conspecific or congeneric level. In extant ecosystems, conspecific facilitation is rare but it occurs in low diversity, stressful environments (e.g., Eränen & Kozlov 2008; Fajardo & McIntire 2011; Cavieres & Peñaloza 2012), where it can lead to the formation of dense populations. The Permian peat flora from Skaar Ridge is species-poor. Mosses, lycopsids, and ferns are each represented by a single species (Smoot & Taylor 1986; Galtier & Taylor 1994; Ryberg *et al.* 2012). Sphenophytes have not been identified, although they co-occur with *Glossopteris* in many plant assemblages from Antarctica and the rest of Gondwana (Cúneo *et al.* 1993; Anderson *et al.* 1999; Prevec *et al.* 2009; Slater *et al.* 2015). Evidence of non-glossopterid seed plants in the peat from Skaar Ridge is also scarce. Cordaite and conifer remains have not been identified in the peat although, like the sphenophytes, they are known to occur in late Permian deposits of

***This is the peer reviewed version of the following article: Decombeix A-L, Durieux T, Harper CJ, Serbet R & Taylor EL. A Permian nurse log and evidence for facilitation in high-latitude Glossopteris forests. Lethaia. which has been published in final form at <https://doi.org/10.1111/let.12386>
This article may be used for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Wiley Terms and Conditions for Use of Self-Archived Versions.***

Antarctica (e.g., Cúneo *et al.* 1993). Non-*Vertebraria* gymnosperm roots are also present in the Skaar Ridge peat (Decombeix *et al.* 2009) but very rare and of diminutive size. Likewise, the large bark fragments that occur abundantly in some peat blocks are all anatomically similar. Such low diversity mire communities dominated by glossopterid trees and with an understory of moss and small-sized ferns, lycophytes, and sphenophytes are documented extensively in Upper Permian high latitude deposits (Cúneo *et al.* 1993; Slater *et al.* 2015; McLoughlin *et al.* 20119; May *et al.* 2019 and references in these papers). A recent analysis of two *in situ* glossopterid forests at Lamping Peak, about 100 km from Skaar Ridge (Fig. 2A), estimated the living, above-ground biomass at 146 to 400 Mg.ha⁻¹ (depending on the method used) and the basal area 65–80 m².ha⁻¹ (Miller *et al.* 2016). These values fall within the range of estimates for some mature temperate rainforests of Australia, Europe, and North America (e.g., Balian *et al.* 2005; Keith *et al.* 2009; Jacob *et al.* 2013; Ximenes *et al.* 2018). Combined with previous data on growth ring anatomy (Creber 1990; Francis 1994; Taylor & Ryberg 2007), these results show that the productivity of late Permian high-latitude glossopterid forests was similar to modern forests in temperate regions. Our new specimen shows that some plant-plant facilitative interactions were also similar.

Accumulated evidence indicates that the glossopterid trees that dominated the late Permian high latitude forests had a thick insulating bark at least at the base of the tree (Decombeix *et al.* 2016), the ability to produce epicormic shoots (Decombeix *et al.* 2010), various leaf habits (deciduous and evergreen, Gulbranson *et al.* 2014), endomycorrhizal associations (Harper *et al.* 2013), and a unique type of root system (Decombeix & Rowe 2018). Although none of these characters in itself is linked to growth at high latitudes, they suggest that these trees could tolerate stressful conditions (for example in terms of temperature range) and colonize diverse environments. The Antarctic glossopterids grew not

***This is the peer reviewed version of the following article: Decombeix A-L, Durieux T, Harper CJ, Serbet R & Taylor EL. A Permian nurse log and evidence for facilitation in high-latitude Glossopteris forests. Lethaia. which has been published in final form at <https://doi.org/10.1111/let.12386>
This article may be used for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Wiley Terms and Conditions for Use of Self-Archived Versions.***

only in peat swamps, but also on seasonally dry, sandy floodplains (Cúneo *et al.* 1993; Isbell & Cúneo 1996). Our new data of nurse log strategy and facilitation between the roots suggest that positive interactions among glossopterids growing at the same locality could also have favoured their expansion and dominance at high latitudes by a process similar to positive niche construction in extant ecosystems (Laland *et al.* 2016). On the other hand, the low diversity and importance of self-facilitation might have made these forests more susceptible to catastrophic collapse if a tipping point for glossopterid survival was reached, as happened across Gondwana at the end of the Permian (Mays *et al.* 2020; Vajda *et al.* 2020 and references therein).

Acknowledgements

We thank Dorothée Letellier (Nistos, France) for preparing the thin-sections of the trunk, Gustav Chat (Maurs, France) for his help with editing, and three anonymous reviewers for their detailed and constructive feedback that helped improve this manuscript. This work was partially supported by the US National Science Foundation [award 1443546].

References

- Anderson, J.M., Anderson, H.M., Archangelsky, S., Bamford, M., Chandra, S., Dettmann, M., Hill, R., McLoughlin, S. & Rösler, O. 1999: Patterns of Gondwana plant colonisation and diversification. *Journal of African Earth Sciences* 28, 145–167.
- Anthelme, F., Cavieres, L.A. & Dangles, O. 2014: Facilitation among plants in alpine environments in the face of climate change. *Frontiers in Plant Science* 5, 387.

***This is the peer reviewed version of the following article: Decombeix A-L, Durieux T, Harper CJ, Serbet R & Taylor EL. A Permian nurse log and evidence for facilitation in high-latitude Glossopteris forests. Lethaia. which has been published in final form at <https://doi.org/10.1111/let.12386>
This article may be used for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Wiley Terms and Conditions for Use of Self-Archived Versions.***

- Baier, R., Ettl, R., Hahn, C., Göttlein, A. 2006. Early development and nutrition of Norway spruce (*Picea abies* (L.) Karst.) seedlings on different seedbeds in the Bavarian limestone Alps – a bioassay. *Annals of Forest Science* 63, 339–348.
- Balian, E.V. & Naiman, R.J. 2005: Abundance and production of riparian trees in the lowland floodplain of the Queets River, Washington. *Ecosystems* 8, 841–861.
- Callaway, R.M., Brooker, R., Choler, P., Kikvidze, Z., Lortie, C.J., Michalet, R., Paolini, L., Pugnaire, F.I., Newingham, B., Aschehoug, E.T., Armas, C., Kikodze, D. & Cook, B.J. 2002: Positive interactions among alpine plants increase with stress. *Nature* 417, 844–848.
- Cantrill, D.J. & Poole, I. 2012: *The Vegetation of Antarctica through Geological Time*. 480 p. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK.
- Cavieres, L.A. & Peñaloza, A. 2012: Facilitation and interference at the intraspecific level: Recruitment of *Kageneckia angustifolia* D. Don (Rosaceae) in the montane sclerophyllous woodland of central Chile. *Perspectives in Plant Ecology, Evolution and Systematics* 14, 13–19.
- Césari, S.N., Busquets, P., Colombo Piñol, F., Méndez Bedia, I. & Limarino, C.O. 2010: Nurse logs: An ecological strategy in a late Paleozoic forest from the southern Andean region. *Geology* 38, 295–298.
- Césari, S.N., Busquets, P., Méndez-Bedia, I., Colombo Piñol, F., Limarino, C.O., Cardó, R. & Gallastegui, G. 2012: A late Paleozoic fossil forest from the southern Andes, Argentina. *Palaeogeography, Palaeoclimatology, Palaeoecology* 333–334, 131–147.
- Choler, P., Michalet, R. & Callaway, R.M. 2001: Facilitation and competition on gradients in alpine plant Communities. *Biological Sciences Faculty Publications*. 230 p.

**This is the peer reviewed version of the following article: Decombeix A-L, Durieux T, Harper CJ, Serbet R & Taylor EL. A Permian nurse log and evidence for facilitation in high-latitude *Glossopteris* forests. *Lethaia*. which has been published in final form at <https://doi.org/10.1111/let.12386>
This article may be used for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Wiley Terms and Conditions for Use of Self-Archived Versions.**

- Christie, D.A. & Armesto, J.J. 2003: Regeneration microsites and tree species coexistence in temperate rain forests of Chiloé Island, Chile. *Journal of Ecology* 91, 776–784.
- Collinson, J.W. & Elliot, D.H. 1984: Geology of Coalsack Bluff. Geology of the Central Transantarctic Mountains. *Antarctic Research Series* 36, 97–102.
- Corenblit, D., Garófano-Gómez, V., González, E., Hortobágyi, B., Julien, F., Lambs, L., Otto, T., Roussel, E., Steiger, J., Tabacchi, E. & Till-Bottraud, I. 2018: Niche construction within riparian corridors. Part II: The unexplored role of positive intraspecific interactions in Salicaceae species. *Geomorphology* 305, 112–122.
- Creber, G.T. 1990: The South polar forest ecosystem. In Taylor T.N. & Taylor E.L. (eds): *Antarctic Paleobiology*, 37–41. Springer, New York, NY.
- Cúneo, N.R., Isbell, J., Taylor, E.L. & Taylor, T.N. 1993: The *Glossopteris* flora from Antarctica: taphonomy and paleoecology. *12 Congrès International de Géologie du Carbonifère-Permien, Buenos Aires. Comptes Rendus* 2, 13–40.
- Decombeix, A.-L. & Rowe, N.P. 2018: Functional significance of cambial development in *Vertebraria* roots: How do unusual xylem traits serve life at a high latitude? In Krings, M., Harper, C.J., Cúneo, N.R. & Rothwell, G.W. (eds): *Transformative Paleobotany: Papers to Commemorate the Life and Legacy of Thomas N. Taylor*, 629–643. Academic Press, San Diego, CA.
- Decombeix, A.-L., Taylor, E.L. & Taylor, T.N. 2009: Secondary growth in *Vertebraria* roots from the Late Permian of Antarctica: a change in developmental timing. *International Journal of Plant Sciences* 170, 644–656.
- Decombeix, A.-L., Taylor, E.L. & Taylor, T.N. 2010: Epicormic shoots in a Permian gymnosperm from Antarctica. *International Journal of Plant Sciences* 171, 772–782.

This is the peer reviewed version of the following article: Decombeix A-L, Durieux T, Harper CJ, Serbet R & Taylor EL. A Permian nurse log and evidence for facilitation in high-latitude Glossopteris forests. Lethaia. which has been published in final form at <https://doi.org/10.1111/let.12386>
This article may be used for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Wiley Terms and Conditions for Use of Self-Archived Versions.

- Decombeix, A.-L., Taylor, E.L. & Taylor, T.N. 2016: Bark anatomy of Late Permian glossopterid trees from Antarctica. *IAWA Journal* 37, 444–458.
- Eränen, J.K. & Kozlov, M.V. 2008: Increasing intraspecific facilitation in exposed environments: consistent results from mountain birch populations in two subarctic stress gradients. *Oikos* 117, 1569–1577.
- Fairon-Demaret, M., Steurbaut, E., Damblon, F., Dupuis, C., Smith, T. & Gerrienne, P. 2003: The in situ *Glyptostroboxylon* forest of Hoegaarden (Belgium) at the Initial Eocene Thermal Maximum (55 Ma). *Review of Palaeobotany and Palynology* 126, 103–129.
- Fajardo, A. & McIntire, E.J. 2011: Under strong niche overlap conspecifics do not compete but help each other to survive: facilitation at the intraspecific level. *Journal of Ecology* 99, 642–650.
- Farabee, M.J., Taylor, E.L. & Taylor, T.N. 1991: Late Permian palynomorphs from the Buckley Formation, central Transantarctic Mountains, Antarctica. *Review of Palaeobotany and Palynology* 69, 353–368.
- Francis, J.E. 1994: Permian climates of southern margins of Pangea: evidence from fossil wood in Antarctica. *Canadian Society of Petroleum Geologists Memoir* 17, 275–282.
- Fukasawa, Y. 2012: Effects of wood decomposer fungi on tree seedling establishment on coarse woody debris. *Forest Ecology and Management* 266, 232–238.
- Galtier, J. & Taylor, T.N. 1994: The first record of ferns from the Permian of Antarctica. *Review of Palaeobotany and Palynology* 83, 227–239.
- Gulbranson, E.L., Isbell, J.L., Taylor, E.L., Ryberg, P.E., Taylor, T.N. & Flaig, P.P. 2012: Permian polar forests: deciduousness and environmental variation. *Geobiology* 10, 479–495.

***This is the peer reviewed version of the following article: Decombeix A-L, Durieux T, Harper CJ, Serbet R & Taylor EL. A Permian nurse log and evidence for facilitation in high-latitude *Glossopteris* forests. *Lethaia*. which has been published in final form at <https://doi.org/10.1111/let.12386>
This article may be used for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Wiley Terms and Conditions for Use of Self-Archived Versions.***

- Gulbranson, E.L., Ryberg, P.E., Decombeix, A.-L., Taylor, E.L., Taylor, T.N. & Isbell, J.L. 2014: Leaf habit of Late Permian *Glossopteris* trees from high-paleolatitude forests. *Journal of the Geological Society* 171, 193–507.
- Harmon, M.E. & Franklin, J.F. 1989: Tree seedlings on logs in *Picea-Tsuga* forests of Oregon and Washington. *Ecology* 70, 48–59.
- Harmon, M.E., Franklin, J.F., Swanson, F.J., Sollins, P., Gregory, S.V., Lattin, J.D., Anderson, N.H., Cline, S.P., Aumen, N.G., Sedell, J.R., Lienkaemper, G.W., Cromack, K. Jr. & Cummins, K.W. 1986: Ecology of coarse woody debris in temperate ecosystems. In: MacFadyen, A. & Ford, E.D. (eds): *Advances in ecological research*, 133–302. Academic Press, Orlando, FL.
- Harper, C.J., Taylor, T.N., Krings, M. & Taylor, E.L. 2013: Mycorrhizal symbiosis in the Paleozoic seed fern *Glossopteris* from Antarctica. *Review of Palaeobotany and Palynology* 192, 22–31.
- Harper, C.J., Decombeix, A.-L., Taylor, T.N., Taylor, E.L. & Krings, M. 2017: Fungal decay in Permian glossopteridalean stem and root wood from Antarctica. *IAWA Journal* 38, 29–48.
- Hass, H. & Rowe, N.P. 1999: Thin sections and wafering. In Jones, T.P. & Rowe, N.P. (eds.): *Fossil Plants and Spores: Modern Techniques*, 76–81. The Geological Society, London, UK.
- He, Q., Bertness, M.D. & Altieri, A.H. 2013: Global shifts towards positive species interactions with increasing environmental stress. *Ecology Letters* 16, 695–706.
- Hofgaard, A. 1993: Structure and regeneration patterns in a virgin *Picea abies* forest in northern Sweden. *Journal of Vegetation Science* 4, 601–608.

***This is the peer reviewed version of the following article: Decombeix A-L, Durieux T, Harper CJ, Serbet R & Taylor EL. A Permian nurse log and evidence for facilitation in high-latitude Glossopteris forests. Lethaia. which has been published in final form at <https://doi.org/10.1111/let.12386>
This article may be used for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Wiley Terms and Conditions for Use of Self-Archived Versions.***

- Isbell, J.L. & Cúneo, N.R. 1996: Depositional framework of Permian coal-bearing strata, southern Victoria Land, Antarctica. *Palaeogeography, Palaeoclimatology, Palaeoecology* 125, 217–238.
- Jacob, M., Bade, C., Calvete, H. et al. 2013: Significance of over-mature and decaying trees for carbon stocks in a Central European natural spruce forest. *Ecosystems* 16, 336.
- Keith H., Mackey B.G. & Lindenmayer, D.B. 2009: Re-evaluation of forest biomass carbon stocks and lessons from the world's most carbon-dense forests. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 106, 11635–11640.
- Lack, A. 1991: Dead logs as a substrate for rain forest trees in Dominica. *Journal of Tropical Ecology* 7, 401–405.
- Laland, K., Matthews, B., & Feldman, M.W. 2016: An introduction to niche construction theory. *Evolutionary Ecology* 30, 191–202.
- Lemon, P.C. 1945: Wood as a substratum for perennial plants in the Southeast. *The American Midland Naturalist* 34, 744–749.
- Lusk, C.H. & Ogden, J. 1992: Age structure and dynamics of podocarp-broadleaf forest in Tongariro National Park, New Zealand. *Journal of Ecology* 80, 379–393.
- Mallik, A.U. 2003: Conifer regeneration problems in boreal and temperate forests with ericaceous understory: role of disturbance, seedbed limitation, and keystone species change. *Critical Reviews in Plant Sciences* 22, 341–366.
- Marguerier, J. 1973: Paléoxylologie du Gondwana Africain: étude et affinités du genre *Australoxylon*. *Palaeontologia Africana* 16, 37–58.
- Martín-Closas, C. & Gomez, B. 2004: Taphonomie des plantes et interprétations paléocéologiques. Une synthèse. *Geobios* 37, 65–88.

This is the peer reviewed version of the following article: Decombeix A-L, Durieux T, Harper CJ, Serbet R & Taylor EL. A Permian nurse log and evidence for facilitation in high-latitude Glossopteris forests. Lethaia. which has been published in final form at <https://doi.org/10.1111/let.12386> This article may be used for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Wiley Terms and Conditions for Use of Self-Archived Versions.

- Maser, C. & Trappe, J.M. (tech. eds.) 1984: The seen and unseen world of the fallen tree. Gen. Tech. Rep. PNW-164. Portland, OR: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Pacific Northwest Forest and Range Experiment Station. 56 p.
- Mays, C., Vajda, V., & Frank, T., Fielding, C., Nicoll, R., Tevyaw, A. & McLoughlin, S. 2020: Refined Permian–Triassic floristic timeline reveals early collapse and delayed recovery of south polar terrestrial ecosystems. *Geological Society of America Bulletin* 10.1130/B35355.1.
- McKee, A., Laroi, G. & Franklin, J.F. 1982: Structure, composition, and reproductive behavior of terrace forests, South Fork Hoh River. Olympic National Park. In Starkey, E.E., Franklin, J.F. & Matthews, J.W. (eds.): *Ecological research in National Parks of the Pacific Northwest*, 22–29. National Park Cooperative Studies Unit, Corvallis, Oregon, USA.
- McLoughlin, S. 1992: Late Permian plant megafossils from the Bowen Basin, Queensland, Australia: Part 1. *Palaeontographica Abteilung B* 228, 105–149.
- McLoughlin, S., Maksimenko, A. & Mays, C. 2019: A new high-paleolatitude permineralized peat flora from the late Permian of the Sydney Basin, Australia. *International Journal of Plant Sciences* 180, 513–539.
- Miller M.F., Knepprath N.E., Cantrill D.J., Francis J.E., & Isbell J.L. 2016: Highly productive polar forests from the Permian of Antarctica. *Palaeogeography, Palaeoclimatology, Palaeoecology* 441, 292–304.
- Narukawa, Y., Iida, S., Tanouchi, H., Abe, S. & Yamamoto, S. 2003: State of fallen logs and the occurrence of conifer seedlings and saplings in boreal and subalpine old-growth forests in Japan. *Ecological Research* 18, 267–277.

**This is the peer reviewed version of the following article: Decombeix A-L, Durieux T, Harper CJ, Serbet R & Taylor EL. A Permian nurse log and evidence for facilitation in high-latitude *Glossopteris* forests. *Lethaia*. which has been published in final form at <https://doi.org/10.1111/let.12386>
This article may be used for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Wiley Terms and Conditions for Use of Self-Archived Versions.**

- Neish, P.G., Drinnan, A.N. & Cantrill, D.J. 1993: Structure and ontogeny of *Vertebraria* from silicified Permian sediments in East Antarctica. *Review of Palaeobotany and Palynology* 79, 221–244.
- Onguene, N.A., Kuyper, T.W. 2002. Importance of ectomycorrhizal network for seedling survival and ectomycorrhiza formation in rain forest of south Cameroon. *Mycorrhiza* 12, 13–17.
- Pigg, K.B. 1990: Anatomically preserved *Glossopteris* foliage from the central Transantarctic Mountains. *Review of Palaeobotany and Palynology* 66, 105–127.
- Prevec, R. Labandeira, C.C., Neveling, J., Gastaldo, R.A., Looy, C.V. & Bamford M. 2009: Portrait of a Gondwanan ecosystem: a new Late Permian fossil locality from KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. *Review of Palaeobotany and Palynology* 156, 454–493.
- Ryberg, P.E., Taylor, E.L. & Taylor, T.N. 2012: Permineralized lycopsid from the Permian of Antarctica. *Review of Palaeobotany and Palynology* 169, 1–6.
- Sanchez, E., Gallery, R. & Dalling, J. 2009: Importance of nurse logs as a substrate for the regeneration of pioneer tree species on Barro Colorado Island, Panama. *Journal of Tropical Ecology* 25, 429–437.
- Santiago, L.S. 2000: Use of coarse woody debris by the plant community of a Hawaiian montane cloud forest. *Biotropica* 32, 633–641.
- Slater, B.J., McLoughlin, S. & Hilton, J. 2015: A high-latitude Gondwanan lagerstätte: The Permian permineralised peat biota of the Prince Charles Mountains, Antarctica. *Gondwana Research* 27, 1446–1473.
- Smith, S.E., Read, D. 2008: Mycorrhizal symbiosis, third ed. Academic Press.

***This is the peer reviewed version of the following article: Decombeix A-L, Durieux T, Harper CJ, Serbet R & Taylor EL. A Permian nurse log and evidence for facilitation in high-latitude Glossopteris forests. Lethaia. which has been published in final form at <https://doi.org/10.1111/let.12386>
This article may be used for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Wiley Terms and Conditions for Use of Self-Archived Versions.***

- Smoot, E.L. & Taylor, T.N. 1986: Structurally preserved fossil plants from Antarctica: II. A Permian moss from the Transantarctic Mountains. *American Journal of Botany* 73, 1683–1691.
- Stachowicz, J. 2001: Mutualism, facilitation, and the structure of ecological communities. *BioScience* 51, 235–245.
- Stubblefield, S.P. & Taylor, T.N. 1986: Wood decay in silicified gymnosperms from Antarctica. *Botanical Gazette* 147, 116–125
- Taylor, E.L. & Ryberg, P.E. 2007: Tree growth at polar latitudes based on fossil tree ring analysis. *Palaeogeography, Palaeoclimatology, Palaeoecology* 255, 246–264.
- Taylor, E. L. , Taylor, T. N. & Collinson, J. W. 1989: Depositional setting and paleobotany of Permian and Triassic permineralized peat from the central Transantarctic Mountains. *International Journal of Coal Geology* 12, 657–679.
- Taylor, E.L., Taylor, T.N. & Cúneo, N.R. 2000: Permian and Triassic high latitude paleoclimates: evidence from fossil biotas. In Huber, B.T., MacLeod, K.G. & Wind, S.L. (eds.): *Warm Climates in Earth History*, 321–350. Cambridge Univ. Press, Cambridge, UK.
- Taylor, T.N., Taylor, E.L. & Krings, M. 2009. *Paleobotany. The Biology and Evolution of Fossil Plants*. 1230 pp. Elsevier/Academic Press, Burlington, MA.
- Torsvik, T.H. & Cocks, L.R.M. 2013: Gondwana from top to base in space and time. *Gondwana Research* 24, 999–1030.
- Vajda, V., McLoughlin, S., Mays, C., Frank, T.D., Fielding, C.R., Tevyaw, A., Lehsten, V., Bocking, M. & Nicoll, R.S. 2020: End-Permian (252 Mya) deforestation, wildfires and flooding—An ancient biotic crisis with lessons for the present. *Earth and Planetary Science Letters* 529, Article 115875

***This is the peer reviewed version of the following article: Decombeix A-L, Durieux T, Harper CJ, Serbet R & Taylor EL. A Permian nurse log and evidence for facilitation in high-latitude *Glossopteris* forests. *Lethaia*. which has been published in final form at <https://doi.org/10.1111/let.12386>
This article may be used for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Wiley Terms and Conditions for Use of Self-Archived Versions.***

- Veblen, T.T., Ashton, D.H. & Schlegel, F.M. 1979. Tree regeneration strategies in a lowland *Nothofagus*-dominated forest in south-central Chile. *Journal of Biogeography* 6, 329–340.
- Weaver, L., McLoughlin, S. & Drinnan, A.N. 1997: Fossil woods from the Upper Permian Bainmedart Coal Measures, northern Prince Charles Mountains, East Antarctica. *AGSO Journal of Australian Geology and Geophysics* 16, 655–676.
- Ximenes, F., Kathuria, A., McLean, M., Coburn, R., Sargeant, D., Ryan, M., Williams, J., Boer, K. & Mo, M. 2018: Carbon in mature native forests in Australia: The role of direct weighing in the derivation of allometric equations. *Forests* 9, 60.

*This is the peer reviewed version of the following article: Decombeix A-L, Durieux T, Harper CJ, Serbet R & Taylor EL. A Permian nurse log and evidence for facilitation in high-latitude *Glossopteris* forests. *Lethaia*. which has been published in final form at <https://doi.org/10.1111/let.12386>
This article may be used for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Wiley Terms and Conditions for Use of Self-Archived Versions.*

FIGURE LEGENDS

Fig. 1. Extant examples of nurse logs in a temperate rainforest, Olympic Peninsula, WA, USA. (A) Seedlings growing on a fallen log. Note the absence of seedlings on the surrounding forest floor.

(B) Colonnade, i.e., old trees still aligned following the pattern of the log they grew on.

(C) Tree growing on a still-upright decaying stump.

Fig. 2. (A) Location of Skaar Ridge (red dot) and other main Permian-Triassic fossil plant sites in the region (black dots) (modified from Collinson and Elliot, 1984).

(B) Position of the Central Transantarctic Mountains in the late Permian (from Torvick & Cocks 2013)

Fig. 3. General aspect of the trunk with rootlets in transverse (A, C, E) and longitudinal (B, D, F) sections

(A) Transverse section of the log showing numerous rootlets (arrows) and one gallery (G) inside the wood, mostly along the growth ring boundaries. Slide 17918-C2-2-2. Scale bar = 3 mm.

(B) Longitudinal section showing some peat (P) with abundant plant remains on top of the trunk (T), a *Vertebraria* root cut in longitudinal section (V), and rootlets growing inside the wood (arrows), mostly along the growth ring boundaries. Slide 17918-C1-2-4. Scale bar = 3 mm.

*This is the peer reviewed version of the following article: Decombeix A-L, Durieux T, Harper CJ, Serbet R & Taylor EL. A Permian nurse log and evidence for facilitation in high-latitude *Glossopteris* forests. *Lethaia*. which has been published in final form at <https://doi.org/10.1111/let.12386>
This article may be used for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Wiley Terms and Conditions for Use of Self-Archived Versions.*

- (C) Enlargement of a transverse section, showing various rootlets isolated or in groups growing inside the wood. Slide 17918-C2-1-3. Scale bar = 1 mm.
- (D) Enlargement in longitudinal section showing the peat (P), a layer of degraded wood (D), and trunk wood (T) with rootlets penetrating along the ring boundaries. Slide 17918-C1-2-2. Scale bar = 1 mm.
- (E) Detail of a transverse section showing on the left, part of a large gallery filled with plant remains including rootlets and on the right, an isolated rootlet with four protoxylem strands. Note the distorted wood cells around the rootlet. Slide 17918-C2-2-2. Scale bar = 0.5 mm
- (F) Detail of a longitudinal section showing a rootlet growing vertically inside the wood. Slide 17918-C1-2-2. Scale bar = 0.5 mm

Fig. 4. Detail of the trunk wood, root anatomy, and evidence of fungal activity.

- (A) Radial sections of the trunk wood showing the low rays and radial pits arranged in groups on the wall of the tracheids. Slide 17918-C1-2-2. Scale bar = 100 μm .
- (B) Radial section of the trunk at the level of a growth ring boundary showing low rays and alternate, opposite, and grouped pitting on the tracheids. Slide 17918-C1-2-2. Scale bar = 100 μm .
- (C) Young diarch root in the wood. Note empty inner cortex (IC). Slide 17918-C2-2-1. Scale bar = 200 μm .
- (D) Young root with three or four protoxylem strands. Note empty inner cortex (IC) and compressed trunk wood around it. Slide 17918-C2-2-3. Scale bar = 200 μm .
- (E) Young root in the wood in oblique section. Slide 17918-C2-2-1. Scale bar = 200 μm .
- (F) Young root in the wood. Slide 17918-C2-2-1. Scale bar = 200 μm .

***This is the peer reviewed version of the following article: Decombeix A-L, Durieux T, Harper CJ, Serbet R & Taylor EL. A Permian nurse log and evidence for facilitation in high-latitude Glossopteris forests. Lethaia. which has been published in final form at <https://doi.org/10.1111/let.12386>
This article may be used for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Wiley Terms and Conditions for Use of Self-Archived Versions.***

(G) Young root with six protoxylem strands and some development of the secondary xylem forming six “arms.” Slide 17918-C2-1-1. Scale bar = 1 mm.

(H) Remains of several rootlets within a hole in the trunk. Note clean borders and lack of compressed trunk wood around the structure and evidence of pocket rot (P) on the right. Slide 17918-C2-2-3. Scale bar = 500 μm .

(I) Fungal hypha (arrows) crossing tracheids in the wood of the trunk. Slide 17918-C2. Scale bar = 10 μm .

(J) Fungal hypha with Y-branch (arrows) in the wood of the trunk. Slide 17918-C2. Scale bar = 10 μm .