

## FUNGI WALK at RUSHBEDS WOOD on September 9th 2023

Penny Cullington

We were a modest group of 13 today for our first autumn outing of the year, and as expected the previous hot dry week had taken its toll on fungal fruiting resulting in our somewhat modest species list. It was a beautiful morning but by midday, despite the odd refreshing blackberry as we did our usual loop round, we were relieved to get back to the cars as both temperature and humidity were rapidly rising! Nevertheless there were still damp, even muddy, patches to be found – if anywhere is going to retain some moisture then this site is surely it, hence our choice of venue today which was a last minute arrangement made in view of the extraordinary and unprecedented fruiting frenzy seen in the last six weeks. It was sod's law that the hottest spell of weather this year should put an end to this just as the date was fixed up! In fact today turned out to be the third hottest UK day ever!

In a change from our normal route starting with the old tram track we took the alternative gate from the car park in order to focus on this the dampest area (often almost impassable for the mud in winter) and this paid off though unfortunately the path edges had just been closely mown – useful in some ways but not in others when hunting for fungi. Nevertheless the path and surrounding areas where penetrable produced some interesting bits and pieces. Two tiny Polypores on deciduous sticks were found – caps only 1 cm across but clearly with pores underneath. The black stem bases pointed to the species: *Cerioporus leptocephalus* (Blackfoot Polypore, previously in genus *Polyporus*) is probably our commonest Polypore and is normally far bigger, up to 10 cm across or so, but this tiny variety, var. *nummularia*, is not that uncommon but does not warrant species status.

Right: *Cerioporus leptocephalus* var. *nummularia*, only 1 cm across and growing on a deciduous twig today. (RC)



Early on a bracket of particular interest was noticed growing in tiered clusters on fallen Birch. Neither I nor Derek recognised it in the field; it had some similarities to several other common species but just didn't fit. At home it dropped some spores overnight giving a white print which turned instantly black with a drop of Melzers reagent, i.e. amyloid, and this plus other microscopic characters should have aided a determination but not so! However, colleague Sue Rogerson from the Hants group was able to identify it for us from our photos and information as *Laxitextum bicolor* (no common name and not a common species), new to the site today.

Left: *Laxitextum bicolor* found on fallen Birch today. (PC)

Only six 'mushroom' types are on the list, none of which provided photos today and only two of which were mycorrhizal species – those growing in symbiosis with trees. However, we did find a rotting bare deciduous branch liberally adorned with a beautiful display of the Ascomycete *Chlorociboria aeruginascens* (Green Elfcup) which is always a crowd pleaser and a thrill to find. The spores were later checked just to make quite sure it was this species and not a lookalike species which has in recent years

been brought to our notice. Two photos are included to show a sense of scale and abundance as well as detail.



Above: a nice fresh collection of *Chlorociboria aeruginascens*. (Left PC; right JH)

Lastly another Ascomycete which, when he found it, Bob understandably thought might be a Myxomycete (Slime Mould). This was a swarm of tiny pale soft blobs which were covered in dark green 'spots' and found on a damp bare deciduous branch. Both Derek and I recognised it from a previous collection made at Hockeridge Wood: *Trichoderma gelatinosum* (no common name), however, is now known to be a complex of species hence should probably be best recorded with sl after the name, ie sensu lato – in the broad sense. This was one of several species new to the site today, is not that common and was a nice find. This will also be sequenced.



Right and below: *Trichoderma gelatinosum* sl, an unusual Ascomycete, each blob being under 1cm across. The green 'spots' are in fact the tips of the spore-bearing sac clusters, each sac containing 16 spores which when mature are shot out to disperse. (Right RC; below JH)



Apologies for this rather brief report. I'll save my energies for the coming events which hopefully will produce more photos and fungi of interest. As I write, the following day, the heavens

have opened so fingers crossed for a more productive walk next week. Thank you to all who came today and to those who sent me photos. For more details of what we found see the separate complete species list.

Photographers

JH = Joe Hawes; PC = Penny Cullington; RC = Rosie Clarke.



Above: a typical woodland scene today. (JH)