

A party of ten of us gathered for our only spring foray of the year. We enjoyed a beautiful sunny morning though we feared that the previous dry spell meant we were unlikely to find much in the way of fungi, particularly agarics, and this proved to be the case. We chose to start by visiting the lagoon area which was likely to produce slightly damper conditions, and then moved across the road to the reserve proper where it was indeed amazingly dry and we found only a few things here to add to our rather meagre list of species. However, we feasted our eyes on a plentiful supply of wild flowers, saw four species of butterfly, several pheasant eggs apparently randomly dropped, and even found a slow-worm hiding away under a sheet of corrugated iron, whilst being serenaded by birdsong including the first of the spring migrants: blackcap and chiff-chaff.



Slow-worm in the lagoon area (photo NW)

Normally our foray lists consist of a good number of agarics, considerably fewer ascos and a smattering of brackets and other assorted groups. (This is due in part to the fact that both Derek and I are considerably less knowledgeable and adept at identifying these other groups.) The exception comes at this time of year when very few agarics choose to fruit, and today just five of our list of 37 species had caps and a stem (the simplistic way to categorise agarics). First was a small species, ‘Mycenoid’ – i.e. similar in general appearance to one of the Bonnet caps) but rusty capped, rusty spored and having a clear ring on the stem. This told us that it was likely to be one of the 20 or so species of *Conocybe* which have a ring – *Conocybe* is a large and tricky genus with some 80 species mostly pretty similar in size, colour and shape, but those having a ring (soon to be split off into a separate genus *Pholiotina*) are easier to sort out, and furthermore there is one which fruits mainly at this time of year, *C. aporos*, and Derek confirmed at home that this was indeed what we’d found. It was one of 14 species we found new to the site today.



*Galerina marginata* on a log in the lagoon area (photo NW)

It was a surprise to find three specimens of *Galerina marginata* (Funeral bell) fruiting on a fallen mossy trunk, possibly Willow. This is another rusty capped species with a ring on the stem but larger and with a different ‘jizz’; though there appear to be very few records of this common species out of its normal fruiting period (October to December), I was satisfied when checking it at home that this is what it had to be.

We also found a couple of collections of a palish capped and dark spored species which I at first suspected might be an *Agrocybe* (Fieldcap), but on Derek’s suggestion that it might be a



*Psathyrella* (Brittlestem) it quickly fell into place as being likely to be *P. spadiceogrisea* (Spring brittlestem) – quite a common spring fruiting species, and at home the microscopic features confirmed this. Another new to the site.

It was clearly too dry and also a bit early for us to be finding the large and distinctive *Calocybe gambosa* (St George’s mushroom) – often on foray lists at this time of year. It appears regularly around St George’s Day in grassy areas or path edges, and its whitish cap and gills and mealy smell make it easy to identify – one to be looking out for in the next few weeks, however.



*Psathyrella spadiceogrisea* in the lagoon area (photo PC)



*Parasola cuniculorum* on horse dung (photo NW)

The only other agarics found were the common *Coprinellus micaceus* (Glistening inkcap), and also one other Inkcap: Joanna’s sharp eyes picked out a tiny specimen on a piece of horse dung, with cap no more than 2-3mm across. It had sadly shrivelled into obscurity by the time Derek got it home, but he managed to incubate and grow another specimen which proved to be *Parasola cuniculorum*, formerly known as the 2-spored variety of *P. misera*, new to the county and also the first record on horse dung (it was previously thought to occur possibly exclusively on rabbit dung).

One bracket worthy of note was a species warden Mick Jones mentioned that we should look out for: this was *Ganoderma applanatum* (Artists fungus) liberally covered in the galls of the fly *Agathomyia wankowiczii* (Yellow-footed fly) which is known to make its home in this specific fungus rather than in the very similar *Ganoderma australis* (Southern bracket). This particular specimen reminds one more of a block of flats, and there were several other similar apartment buildings on the same fallen Willow trunk.



*Ganoderma applanatum* liberally infested with *Agathomyia wankowiczii* (photo TM)

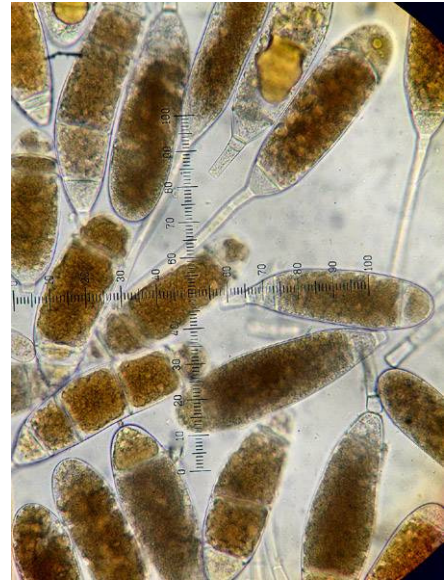
Amongst the ascos we found, two of the larger springtime cup fungi turned up: in the lagoon area John found our only two specimens of *Sarcoscypha austriaca* (Scarlet elfcup), and in the field below the main reserve Claudi found several specimens of *Disciotis venosa* (Vinegar cup), this being another species not recorded here previously.





*Scarcoscypha austriaca* (left – photo NW) and *Disciotis venosa* (right – photo TM) found today.

Another of John's finds: a patch of orange blobs on a piece of bare wood which had us confused as the surface was bumpy and roughened and not smooth and jelly-like as in the similar *Dacrymyces stillatus* (Common jelly spot) – a species we often come across on bare wood. Derek did the donkeywork and identified it as *Bactridium flavum*, a Hyphomycete with enormous and interestingly shaped spores which were the cause of the roughened surface through which they were protruding. This was another species new to the site.



*Bactridium flavum*, each blob about 4mm across; the central close-up shot shows the roughened surface; on the right are the spores like elongated tadpoles with long tails and septa (divisions) in the main body. (photos DJS)

Several species were collected growing on living leaves of various plants, some familiar to us and expected at this time, others not recognised and needing work at home. Of these the most interesting were *Cumminsiella mirabilissima* on *Mahonia*, *Drepanopeziza salicis* on *Salix cinerea* and *Marssonina daphnes* on *Daphne laureola*, all three collected by Tony and new to the county.



*Cumminsiella mirabilissima* (left) and *Drepanopeziza salicis* (right), both new to the county (photos TM)





*Marssonina daphnes* (left), also new to the county (photo TM)

Despite the dry condition we certainly found enough to keep our interest and make the visit well worth while. Dancersend is a well recorded site, so it is always gratifying to be able to add to the list of species known to occur here. It remains for me to thank all the attendees for their dedication and excellent searching, and also to Nick, Tony and Derek for their photos which make such a difference to a report of this type.

See the complete list for more details of what we found today.



Forayers today at Dancersend lagoons