

BFG Foray at Oakley Wood, Bernwood Forest
September 7th, 2014

Report by Penny Cullington

This our first outing of the autumn season was joint with the Fungus Survey of Oxfordshire, the site being right on the county border though just on the Buckinghamshire side. Fourteen of us, about half and half from each group, enjoyed a bright warm morning though the previous dry week meant that fruiting was not prolific. The terrain here is very different from our Chiltern foray sites, the soil being slightly more acidic and the feel of the place more 'Scottish' - mainly mossy conifer plantation with some Oak, Birch and Willow dotted around as well. Our mix of beginners and more experienced forayers produced a list of 80 species; though a good site for early fruiting species such as Boletes, Chanterelles and the like, these were in very short supply with just two small specimens of *Boletus*, two species of *Leccinum* and a tiny clump of *Cantharellus tubaeformis* (Yellowlegs) found. Other things made up for their absence, however, as is nearly always the case.



Above *Russula velenovskyi* today (photo CS)

Under the Birches wherever they occurred we found good specimens of the attractive and brightly coloured *Russula velenovskyi* (Coral Brittlelegill) – this was by far the commonest of the nine species of *Russula* found, though the purple stemmed *R. queletii* growing under the Spruce came second. The most interesting was probably a rather broken specimen of a pale pink species with a cap cuticle which hardly peeled at all; this rang a bell with me, and having deliberately scratched and damaged it further I kept it in a pot and was rewarded several hours later with the tell-tale brassy yellow staining which develops over time in *Russula luteotacta* (no common name, though its Latin name says it all, really).



Above *Russula luteotacta* (photo from Hodgemoor Wood PC)

Related to the genus *Russula* is *Lactarius* (both have ornamented spores which stain black with iodine in a chemical reagent called Melzers) and we found five species today. This genus is easily recognised due to the 'milk' or latex which exudes from the gills when damaged, the colour of this milk being critical to determining the species. We regularly picked up one which has not only an orange cap and gills (though these tend to turn green with age) but also bright orange milk; growing under Spruce rather than Pine, this helped to identify it as *L. deterrimus* (False saffron milkcap). There is, however, a further similar species which if kept for a while shows wine red staining where damaged, and looking in Joanna's collecting box at the end of the foray we found one of her specimens had indeed stained wine red, making it *L. semisanguifluus* (again no common name but the Latin is self-explanatory).



Above *Lactarius deterrimus* today (photo CS)

As we have a workshop coming up in a few days on the genus *Lactarius* tutored by Geoffrey Kibby (details on the website), Derek collected and took photos (see next page) of a common species, *Lactarius tabidus* (Birch milkcap), including its distinctive character of milk which turns yellow on a hankie!



Left, *Lactarius tabidus* growing under Birch today, and below three patches of its yellow milk staining Derek's hankie. (photo DJS)



Two interesting things which we've found at this site before turned up: one was the spiky fluffy tufts of *Thelephora penicillata* growing on woody debris in the damp ditches, and another was an unusual species of *Armillaria* (Honey fungus). *A. tabescens* (Ringless honey fungus) is the rarest member of the genus, the only one which lacks a ring on the stem, and grows tightly clustered on the wood of Oak. Young material was found today by Jenny Schafer. The few county records of this species are all from the Bernwood Forest area.

Right *Armillaria tabescens* (Ringless Honey fungus) found today. (Photo DJS)



There was much discussion at one point today about one of the many clumps of *Gymnopus* (previously *Collybia*) *fusipes* (Spindle toughshank) which appeared to be growing attached to the roots of Spruce, though it is known to grow only on Oak or very occasionally Beech (not present on this site). After some probing, however, we came to the conclusion that this was not the case, and there was Oak also nearby. It was an interesting exercise, however.

Left *Gymnopus fusipes* today growing amongst Oak and Spruce roots but probably attached to the Oak. (photo DJS)

At one point I was handed a small insignificant-looking pale buff specimen with pale rusty gills; this I thought might be a species of *Conocybe* and took it home to work on, this being a genus only possible to separate to species with use of microscopy. My efforts were rewarded, as it keyed out to *C. siliginea*, a species usually associated with Spruce with only 56 British records and just one previously for the county.

Two common woodland species of *Agaricus* turned up, but the small *A. dulcidulus* is worth a mention and is much less often encountered. Typical is the purplish tinted patch in the centre of the cap, the thin ring on the stem and the yellowing on the stem where handled. This is just beginning to develop in Claudi's nice photo but after a few more minutes was very marked.

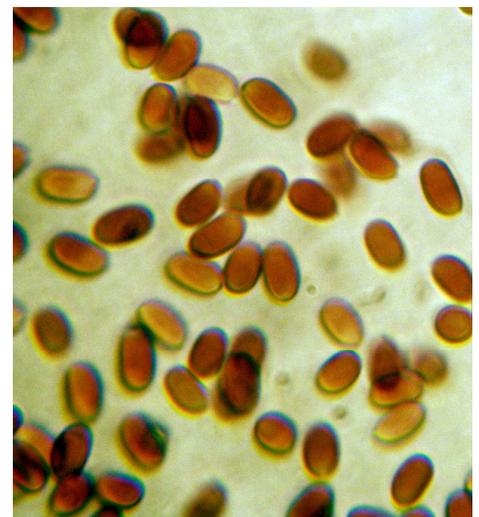
Right *Agaricus dulcidulus* today (photo CS)



When Claudi sent me his photos he mentioned that he'd taken a plant home with him to identify, and then discovered it had a rust on the underside of the leaves. Checking in Ellis & Ellis which helpfully has a plant index which enables one to track down what fungi occur on a particular plant, he was able to identify this rust as *Coleosporium tussilaginis*, here on Red Bartsia but more commonly found on Coltsfoot. Good detective work, Claudi!

Above *Coleosporium tussilaginis* on Red Bartsia today (photo CS)

Perhaps the most exciting and rarest find today was a singleton rather dark specimen of *Hygrophoropsis* (False Chanterelle). We found several 'normal' specimens with typical orange cap and gills, but this one, though having the typical shape and decurrent gills, was clearly different with a darker finely hairy cap and contrasting salmon gills. Derek and I both instantly thought of Geoffrey Kibby's article on the genus in a fairly recent edition of the magazine *Field Mycology*, and suspected we had one of the new species mentioned there. At home this proved to be the case, and it fitted perfectly with *Hygrophoropsis rufa*, previously synonymised with *H. aurantiaca* but now thought by several European authorities including Geoffrey to be a good species. Following his description I checked the spores which were the correct size and shape and also strongly dextrinoid (staining brown in Melzer's reagent); I also found the ochre yellow mycelial strands amongst the needle litter still attached to the stem base, and comparing the specimen with his photos there was no doubt. As the species is not as yet officially recognised in this country, there are no records on the national database; Geoffrey worked on several British collections for his article, however, so this will be amongst the first handful of records for the UK and certainly a first for the county. I will be taking the specimen together with photos and a sporeprint to give him at the workshop at the weekend.



Hygrophoropsis rufa – a species of False Chanterelle, found today at Oakley Wood, Bernwood Forest. Left and below right, fruitbody and cap, below left gills and stipe, above spores magnified x 1000. (photos PC)



Thanks to all who attended and collected such an interesting range of species. Thanks also to Derek and Claudi for their photos.

For more details of what we found see the complete list.

Photos © Penny Cullington, Derek Schafer and Claudi Soler