SPOREPRINT *Newsletter of the Norfolk Fungus Study Group No. 6* **April 2014**

Spring fungi are an acquired taste. Without the distraction of great big agarics, the spring forayer can search for ascomycete gems. How many you find depends on how hard you look; how many you identify is another matter. Some ascos are large enough to get a mention in the last few pages of the field guides and this spring has been a good season for them.

## Winter forays

Intrepid members of NFSG have managed a foray in each of the months this year so far. A summary of the records is tabulated below (and see p.3):

| | **Lion's Mouth, Felbrigg** | **Swanton Novers** | **Constable Doles, Acle** | **Damgate Wood, Acle** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Jan 18 | Feb 15 | Mar 15 | Mar 15 |
| Agarics | 13 | 3 | 4 | 2 |
| Brackets & corticioids | 11 | 10 | 6 | 6 |
| Gasteromycetes | 4 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Jelly fungi | 6 | 2 | 0 | 1 |
| Cantharelloids | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Hydnoids | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Ascomycetes | 14 | 12 | 6 | 6 |
| Other | 0 | 0 | 2 | 1 |
| TOTAL | 50 | 29 | 18 | 17 |

Forays are, of course, judged by the quality of the finds as much as their quantity. Lion's Mouth produced *Cantharellus tubaeformis*, as did Swanton Novers, where we also found *Skeletocutis amorpha, Nitschkia confertula* (see 'Warts on Warts' below), and *Vialaea insculpta* (a pyrenomycete forming patches on green holly stems). At Constable Doles (a strip of meadow and carr) several specimens of *Coprinellus radians* were collected and at nearby Damgate Woods, *Sarcoscypha austriaca* littered the floor (at least over a small area).

*Vialaea insculpta* on Holly. Swanton Novers, Feb. 2014. *Tony Leech.*

## My Cedar Cups floweth over

This year I have been sent a remarkable number of records of Cedar Cup *Geopora sumneriana* which is not only beautiful but unambiguously identifiable from a photograph, forming as a hollow sphere just below ground and opening to reveal its grey spore-producing surface. Its habitat is distinctive too – always under cedar trees as it is one of the few discomycetes to form a myco-rrhizal association with a tree.

Cedar Cup, *Geopora sumneriana*. Colney, Norwich, March 2014. *Andrew Davis*

## Masses of morels

It may not be immediately obvious, but morels are stalked discomycetes with the 'cup' folded and wrinkled to increase surface area, although in *Disciotis* the stalk is short and the 'cup' hardly wrinkled. I would not describe morels as common in Norfolk (although the small Black Morel *Morchella elata* is becoming increasingly so on woodchips) but the False Morel *Gyromitra esculenta* (which as its English name correctly suggests is not actually a morel at all but a member of the Discinaceae) is extremely uncommon. It was known in Norfolk from a single record (Kelling, 1981; Reg & Lil Evans) until Dave Shearing sent me a photograph of one growing in his garden at Rushford, east of

Black Morel *Morchella elata*. North Walsham, April 2014. *John Spooner.*

False Morel *Gyromitra esculenta*. Rushord, Norfolk, Aprl 2014. *Dave Shearing.*

Thetford and only just in Norfolk. Beware, however, the specific name is a misnomer. The False Morel is poisonous although it is said that if the fungus is boiled for an hour it becomes edible. I wouldn't trust this and can't believe a fungus boiled for an hour is worth eating anyway! The poisonous principle is gyromitrin which breaks down in the body to the toxic monomethylhydrazine – perhaps more widely known as a rocket propellant.

Bleach Cup *Disciotis venosa*. Reffley Woods, King's Lynn, April 2014. *Jenny Kelly.*

Semifree Morel *Mitrophora semilibera*, Flordon. *Debbi Jaffey.*

Still scarce, but rather more widespread, is the Bleach Cup *Disciotis venosa*. In the last few weeks I have been sent three photographs of this fungus including one from Jenny Kelly who found it at Reffley Woods, King's Lynn and reported that the chlorine smell was very evident. For some reason, perhaps an error, Sterry's book uses the English name Black Cup for this species. It usually occurs on chalky soil, often in damp woodland.

In addition to Bleach Cup, a foray by the Dersingham Mushroom Club to Ringstead Downs in mid-April recorded 'a few scruffy Thimble Morels *Verpa conica* in the usual place'.

A surprise email in late April included a photograph of a Semifree Morel *Mitophora semilibera* from Flordon by Debbi Jaffey. This too has occurred at Ringstead Downs, its only other Norfolk site.

## Colourful characters

*Sarcoscypha austriaca.* Ashwellthorpe Lower Wood, March 2014. *Anne Edwards.*

The intensity of colour in Scarlet Elfcup *Sarcoscypha austriaca* lifts the spirits of anyone glimpsing it on a woodland floor in early spring. But it is a species that cannot be unambiguously identified from a photograph because of the superficially identical Ruby Elfcup *S. coccinea* with more pointed spores and straighter 'hairs' on the underside. Despite the English names there really is no difference in colour. Curiously, a lot of older records check out as *S. coccinea* but all recent records in Norfolk, and across much of Britain, are of *S. austriaca*. Anne Edwards who photographed this elfcup in Ashwellthorpe Lower Wood was able to look at the DNA of her specimen but intriguingly in this case the sequences from the 'the internal transcribed spacer of nuclear ribosomal DNA', normally used to separate species, do not allow a completely clear cut distinction – this despite the two being apparently 'good' species.

Neil Mahler's discovery of a clustered discomycete on gorse at Pin Mill in Suffolk which was yellow-green when young but matured to black had him puzzled until Martyn Ainsworth suggested *Ionomidotis fulvotingens.* With only 15 or so British records it was new to Suffolk (and would have been to Norfolk).

*Ionomidotis fulvotingens*. Pin Mill, Suffolk, April 2014. *Neil Mahler.*

All this brings to mind the much-asked, but never-answered, question of whether colour has any adaptive significance in fungi. Just be grateful.

## Warts on warts

A number of black encrusting pyenomycetes of the genus *Hypoxylon* (now split into *Hypoxylon* and *Annulohypoxylon*) have been given the whimsical

*Nitschkia confertula* on Rusty Woodwart *Hypoxylon rubiginosa.* Swanton Novers Great Wood, February 2014. *Tony Leech.*

English name woodwart although they are saprotrophic rather than parasitic. In Britain there are at least 10 species of *Hypoxylon* and three of *Annulohypoxylon* (the latter with papillae or pimples at the opening of each perithecium). At Swanton Novers a specimen of Rusty Woodwart *Hypoxylon rubiginosum* was found covered with smaller black spheres. These were identified as *Nitschkia confertula,* a fungus parasitic on the *Hypoxylon*.

## A misidentification and a remarkable coincidence

When James Parry showed me the striking photo he had taken at Bosigran, Cornwall I jumped to the premature conclusion that the red agaric on the gorse stump was possibly the rare *Crepidotus cinnabarinus* and alerted Cornwall's county fungus recorder, Roy Phillips. Remarkably, Roy had photographed the same stump on the same day and had assumed that the agaric was Velvet Shank *Flammulina velutipes*. Nevetheless he returned to check it out. He was right – a common fungus, often seen on gorse during the winter months. He christened this unusually red form Flaming Lena.


Photo: *James Parry*


Photo: *Roy Phillips*

## Dungy fungi

So you want to find a new fungus species for Norfolk? Easy. Collect a bit of herbivore dung (rabbit and deer come in neat pellets but any species will do), get hold of Mike Richardson's book* and wait a couple of weeks. That is what I have been doing on and off over the past year and have added ten species to the Norfolk list. This does not reflect any special skill of mine, or even luck, but rather the avoidance of this


*Ascobolus furfuraceus* on wallaby dung, Dinosaur Park , Lenwade, March 2013. *Tony Leech.*


Top left: *Coprinopsis radiata* on sheep dung, Cranwich Pits, August 2013. Top right: *Coprobia granulata* on cow dung, Felbrigg, Norfolk, September 2012. Bottom left: *Pilobolus crystallinus* on rabbit dung. Cranwich Pits, Nov 2012. Bottom right: S*chizothecium tetrasporum* on rabbit dung. The Nunnery, Thetford, August 2011. *Tony Leech.*

substrate by past Norfolk mycologists, especially Ted Ellis who pretty well claimed all the other microfungi.

The fungi you will encounter on dung incubated in a moist chamber – a fancy name for a small plastic container lined with wet kitchen tissue - belong to three main groups: small agarics, mostly *Coprinopsis* and *Coprinellus* species; small but frequently attractive discomycetes, and minute black 'pyrenomycetes' which look identical but which can generally be separated under the microscope. Some 30 species of delicate whitish coprinus-type agarics occur on dung and because they will have developed under sheltered conditions display immaculate veil features which often makes identification possible. Whilst many coprophilous fungi have some preference for the source of their substrate, few are strongly specific.

**Keys to Fungi on Dung* M.J.Richardson & R. Watling. 1996 (more comprehensive than earlier versions). British Mycological Society.

## Ian's cemetery

Ian Senior is a one-site mycologist! That is not really accurate but he has put a lot of effort into recording the fungi at Earlham Cemetery, Norwich. The list now stands at around 180 species, although as Ian freely admits, some of these identifications are tentative. But there is no doubt about other species which include several new county records. In one small area of grass between the graves Ian has collected Yew Club *Clavicorona taxophila* and


*Clavicorona taxophila,* Earlham Cemetery, Norwich, 2013. *Ian Senior*

*Sowerbyella radiculata* var. *radiculata*, Earlham Cemetery, Norwich, 2013. *Ian Senior*

a particularly rare earthtongue, *Geoglossum elongatum*, recently identified by Paul Cannon and not recorded in Britain since 2006. The same small area is also a hotspot for waxcaps of which nine species have now been formally identified and one other is known to grow there.

In 2013 Alex Prendergast found *Sowerbyella radiculata* var. *radiculata*, a large yellow cup fungus, under Lawson's Cypress there. We thought at first that this was new to Norfolk but later found several records in the national database (Fungal Records Database of Britain and Ireland http://www.fieldmycology.net/FRDBI/FRDBI.asp). Several of these were from Charles Plowright in the King's Lynn area between 1874 and 1896 but there is also a more recent record (AJ Moore, 1986) from Grimstone Warren and an East Norfolk record (GJ Cooke, 1941) from Dunston churchyard just south of the Southern Bypass.

Ian would welcome further records from the cemetery.

## Three in one

With the remote possibility of getting an additional record for a mid-April foray at Kelling Heath Holiday Park, I pulled a small Birch Polypore *Piptoporus betulinus* from a standing trunk to examine the underside for Ochre Cushion *Hypocrea pulvinata*. There was not much chance; Birch Polypores at this time of year have mostly been eaten out by insects. This one, however, was hard, almost mummified, and not only did it bear an equally hard Ochre Cushion but the rest of the pores were covered by what looked like black bristles. A squint through a hand lens revealed that these were actually the necks of perithecia embedded in a greyish stroma and that *Melanospora lagenaria* could be added to the list. This was the second record for Norfolk, the first being from Holt Hall, only a few miles to the east, where it was found in 2011 on old Smoky Bracket *Bjerkandera adusta*. Of the 19 records on FRDBI, ten are from *Piptoporus*, four from *Bjerkandera* and one from *Trametes*. One was found on *Epilobium* (willowherb) and the hosts for the remainder were unspecified.

*Melanospora lagenaria* on the underside of an old Birch Polypore. Kelling Heath Holiday Park. *Tony Leech*

The foray at Kelling Heath produced 34 species of which only three were agarics: Pinecone Cap *Strobilurus tenacellus*; Sulphurtuft *Hypholoma fasciculare* and Honey Fungus rhizomorphs.

## Spring Hazelcup

Although by no means uncommon. Spring Hazelcup *Encoelia furfuracea* is an attractive spring asco to be seen on standing dead or dying hazel branches. When found, the fungus is often shrivelled but this specimen was pristine.

Spring Hazelcup *Encoelia furfuracea*. Thursford Wood, April 2014. *Tony Leech*.