Fungus Survey of Oxfordshire

NEWSLETTER APRIL 2006

Fungus in the Spotlight

Cortinarius violaceus from Nettlebed Woods, a painting by Caroline Jackson-Houlston

Tiny Puffballs Reappear

One of the smallest of the puffballs (described as a like a white pea on a 4cm white stalk) has turned up at 2 sites in Oxfordshire after a 212 year gap in records. Before this year the one and only record for the Winter Stalk Puffball (***Tulostoma brumale***) in Oxon was (according to the British Mycological Society Database) in 1794 on a mud capped wall. Mud capped walls no longer exist as a habitat - every old stone wall I checked in Kidlington has the stones now secured in place with mortar or concrete or the top layer has been capped by concrete. This makes sense as the wall holds together much longer and needs less maintenance, but it means the well drained, sandy, calcareous conditions needed by ***T. brumale*** have disappeared from walls. Luckily, the excavation of Dry Sandford Pit and Hitchcopse Pit near Cothill have created just the conditions the puffball needs. Calcareous, sandy soil with intensive rabbit grazing at both these sites provides the very short mossy sward similar to the coastal sand dune sites favoured by the tiny puffballs in other counties. Such winter fruiting species may easily be missed by autumn forays, as they will not have emerged above ground until December. A foray on Boxing Day is recommended as the ideal time for searching for this species! J Webb

Tulostoma brumale (Winter Stalk Puffball)

A Walk with Watling

In May 2005 an exceptional weekday foray arranged by Alan Hills at Harcourt Arboretum was led for the group by the nationally famous mycologist, Roy Watling. The combination of planted exotic trees, natural oak woodland with bluebells and the extensive Rhododendron collection provided a large number of important fungal records and was greatly enjoyed by all.

Interested in joining us on our forays? Contact the group secretary W. MacEachrane, Tel. 01993 811828
You are very welcome, but note this group focuses on identification skills and accurate records. We do not collect for eating.

The danger of Common Names

Many popular fungi books now give common English names, when looking up *Xerocomus chrysenteron* we find it described as Red-cracked Boletus or Red-cracking Boletus.
Translating *Chrysenteron* from Latin/Greek, it reads Golden yellow inside, so how does it show red when cracking? The answer is – it does not
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Boletus chrysenteron

In June 2003 a new species, *Xerocomus cisalpinus* Simonini, Ladurner & Peintner was published; translating from Latin/Greek it says "Occurring south of the Alps". This has now been proved to be far from the truth occurring over much of northern Europe. In the British Isles it is far more common than *X. chrysenteron,* but before its publication in 2003 the two had gone along side by side considered to be the same species.

Points for easy identification in the field

X. chrysenteron - cracks yellow in the cap
X. cisalpinus – cracks pinkish to red in the cap
X. chrysenteron – the flesh is yellow when cut becoming ± reddish toward the base, rarely blue but if some very little. A Hills

Boletus cisalpinus

Recording update

It seems to have been a very busy 2005 with ten forays and the largest number of records being generated by the rich sites of Wytham Wood and the Warburg Reserve each with between 55 and 60 identified species. Thanks to all who led and attended forays and to all those who spent many hours on difficult identifications. The 7390 records accumulated by this group and entered to the computerized Oxon database by Marion and Arthur Warland to summer 2003, are now safely lodged with Paul Kirk at the British Mycological Society. Arthur and Marion are to be congratulated in their diligent and accurate work especially as a great many records had to be meticulously re- entered after a problem with swapped fields of collector and recorder on the computer was detected. The value of this resource was demonstrated when Sarah Watkinson of the Dept of Plant Sciences at Oxford University enquired about the abundance of certain mycorrhizal fungi in Oxon as background to a paper for the journal New Phytologist. By just entering the names of the fungi she mentioned, it was possible to pull up all the observations of each species in the sites surveyed and give her the answer she needed. J Webb, database holder

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