

Fungus Survey of Oxfordshire

British Mycological Society

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Due to a good last year, our 9 forays in 2004 generated 394 records for the database; with the record number going to Nettlebed Woods, where 90 species were encountered, including the rare deep purple-violet *Cortinarius violaceus* with its felty-scaly cap. Even 40 species were found at the BBOWT reserve of Hitchcose Pit - unusual for a site which is mainly rabbit grazed grassland with Birch scrub. The records have not yet been sent up to the main BMS database, but this is expected to be possible within the next month.

Thanks are due to all the foray leaders and those who attended the forays, helping to generate these records by their sharp eyes and diligent searching (also to those who did the time consuming microscope work on the difficult specimens!).

Fungus in the spotlight

It is *Sarcodontia crocea* from The Cleys old apple and pear orchard in Warborough near Shillingford. After seeing a photograph in 'Field Mycology' magazine for summer 2004, Judy Webb was able to recognise this distinctive fungus. A specimen was collected and the identity confirmed by an expert at the BMS, Kew. There were only 13 previous records on the BMS database, meaning it is very rare. Looking rather like a mass of yellowish custard issuing from rot holes in the ancient trees, the distinctive feature close up is the downwardly pointing mass of 'teeth' which look like mini-stalactites. Also close up, one cannot miss the distinctive smell - fruity, like pear drops or rotting apples with a hint of aniseed. Kept indoors in a warm room, the smell became quite overpowering and unpleasant. The tree it was on is possibly 100 years old.



Anybody with old apple trees in their garden or orchard would do well to look out for this fungus. Unlike most other fungi, it is at its best in July and August – meaning that all autumn forays would miss it. The group would very much like to hear from anyone who thinks they may have a location for it and old trees with it on should definitely be preserved from the axe!

The Oxfordshire Museums Store in Standlake has all the group's dried fungal herbarium specimens. For years these have been in the care of John Campbell, who has also received our records for the Oxfordshire Biological Records Centre. We thank him and wish him all the best in his recent retirement.

We would like to mention to all those interested in fungi (or indeed any wildlife) that BBOWT are calling for help in surveying species on their reserves. The FSO cannot visit more than one or two reserves a year. If you would like to visit and help by recording, ring Debbie Lewis at BBOWT, tel 01865 775476.

The Fungus Survey of Oxfordshire was set up with the intention of assembling an accurate record of the fungi to be found in the county, thus establishing a reliable database of the diversity and abundance of fungi that could be used for reference in assessing the effect of future changes.

J Webb