

Some Conifer-associated Fungi found in Wyre Forest

Rhizopogon luteolus Fr. (Yellow False Truffle), *Rhizina undulata* Fr. (Pine Firefungus) and *Auriscalpium vulgare*, S. F. Gray. (Earpick Fungus)

JOHN BINGHAM

Rhizopogon luteolus is an uncommon hypogeous fungus associated with Scots Pine and appears to be rare in the forest. The fruit body is between 1.5–5cm across, ovate to globose, whitish at first then dirty ochre-yellow covered in tawny mycelial strands. It typically occurs in Scottish pine woods.



Rhizopogon luteolus

John Bingham

During the WFSG slug and fungus day on 30th October 2010 a number of *R. luteolus* were discovered under Scots pine at Longdon Wood. They were falling victim to the Lemon Slug, a case of one rare species eating another, but they appeared to be a good colony of fungi and able to cope with the ravages of a few slugs. Another location for the fungus in 2010 was discovered at Malpass Woods which brought the total I am aware of to three sites, all with substantial numbers. It may be more common than realised with Scots Pines, but being partly buried it can easily be missed.

Recent research has established that *Rhizopogon* is a member of the Boletales, closely related to the genus *Suillus*, that includes the Larch Bolete. All species of *Rhizopogon* are ectomycorrhizal on tree roots and are play an important role in the ecology of coniferous forests.



Auriscalpium vulgare

John Bingham

Another uncommon fungus that appeared in some numbers in October 2010 was *Auriscalpium vulgare*. This small species is saprobic on buried decaying pine cones, typically Scots Pine. It has a long thin stem about 2-4cm long and a small dark brown cap with spines on the underside. Numerous specimens were found out in open grassland within the woodland. Birds or small mammals must have moved the cones and buried them away from the pine trees.

Finally another conifer associate found in 2010 was *Rhizina undulata*. As far as I am aware this was the first recent record of this scarce fungus from the forest, certainly a new species for me in Wyre. This was found on a fire site in a forestry clear fell area at Longdon Wood, where Douglas Fir had been removed and the brash burnt.



Rhizina undulata

John Bingham

The fungus is 4–10 cm across, 3-8 cm high, chestnut brown in colour with a paler margin. It forms irregularly lobed cushions that are attached to the ground by numerous thick whitish rhizoids growing from the underside. It is normally disliked by foresters as it causes a serious disease of conifers called group dying. In this case the area was cleared as part of the reversion back to native broadleaf under the Plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites (PAWS) restoration.

Although most conifer species are not native to the forest, having some introduced conifers helps increase the overall biodiversity. So whilst we may dislike the even-age plantations of dark spruce, having a few conifers in the forest is perhaps not a bad thing! Just don't tell Richard Boles our Forestry Commission officer!

REFERENCES

- Legon, N.W. and Henrici, A. Kew's online Checklist of the British & Irish Basidiomycota P.J. Roberts, B.M. Spooner & R. Watling. Database designed by J.A. Cooper and supported by P.M. Kirk
- Breitenbach, J. and Kränzlin, F. (1998) Fungi of Switzerland Vol.1 & 2. Lucerne
- Jordan, M. (2004) The Encyclopedia of Fungi of Britain and Europe. Frances Lincoln