

Some Summer Fungi in Wyre Forest

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Fungi are often difficult to identify and in the field it is all too easy to dismiss species as being common ones unless you take a closer look. Early fruiting species in July and August are well worth a closer examination as often they are different to the more common look-alike species found later in the season. Wyre Forest has well over 2,000 species of fungi and the lists keep growing, clearly an important site for this neglected Kingdom!

Russula violeipes Quél. (1898) - Velvet Brittlelegill



Quite a few fungi that fruit early in the season have disappeared by the main autumn fruiting normally late September to mid October. This is typical of *Russula violeipes*, the Velvet Brittlelegill, an uncommon species of fungus and rarely recorded from Wyre Forest. Typically it occurs with beech trees often on the edge of a forest ride but it may also be found with oak. The pale yellow cap and white stipe with a violet flush is quite distinctive and normally makes them immediately recognizable. The gills are brittle and break, hence the name 'brittle gills'. The commonest yellow *Russula* species is *R. ochroleuca* an abundantly occurring species in Wyre Forest.

The presence of large spherical cells, 'sphaerocysts' in the stipe is a characteristic feature to distinguish the Russulaceae from other fungi. In *Russula* the stipe breaks or snaps easily and does not bend. The colour of the spores varies from white to deep cream. *Russula* are mycorrhizal fungi associated with trees and shrubs so it's important to note the habitat when collecting specimens.

While it's relatively easy to identify fungi belonging to this genus, it not easy to name the species of *Russula*. Look for distinguishing features; the cap colour (can be very variable), spore print colour, the taste (mild/bitter/acrid), does the cap peel or not, reaction of the flesh to ferrous sulphate (FeSO₄). (Buczacki 2013).

Russula chloroides (Krombh) Bres. - Blue Band Brittlelegill



This species has been particularly common in 2013 together with the look-alike *Russula delica*, Milk White Brittlelegill. Normally *Russula chloroides*, the Blue Band Brittlelegill, is scarce in the forest. It is a large mushroom with a cream off-white sticky cap, so dirt and woody debris often sticks to it. It would be easy to dismiss the species wrongly as *Lactarius piperatus*, the Peppery Milkcap, but *Russulas* have no milk in the cap. Some authorities consider it to be a variety of the more common species *Russula delica*, but *Russula chloroides* is rather smaller and has an obvious blue band at the top of the stipe where it joints to the gills. (Kibby 2012b). It is mycorrhizal with oak trees on neutral soils so Wyre Forest is not the ideal site for it. Generally common and widespread in Britain.



Boletus appendiculatus Schaeff: Fr. - Butter Oak Bolete

This is a large summer fruiting bolete that occurs more in southern Britain so its appearance in Wyre Forest is unusual. I've personally not recorded this species before and it appears to be very rare in the forest. Associated

with oak, it was found on 25th August 2013 growing on a steep south facing bank with bare soil under an old oak coppice. Over a dozen specimens were found in the general area. The cap is 12cm across, bay brown to rusty, the stipe lemon-yellow at apex darker below, often with red patches with a cream network pattern. The flesh is white to pale yellow, and it turns blue with damage or if cut. Tubes lemon-yellow bruising faintly blue. (Kibby 2012a)

Leccinum crocipodium (Letell.) Watling - Saffron Bolete



Another southern bolete species with a few records for Worcestershire, in Shropshire it has only been recorded from the Wyre Forest. It is an early fruiting species that occurs after summer rain in July or August and disappears by September. I have five records for the forest and 10th August 2013 provided two of them. Forest rides near oaks are often a favoured habitat and often the fungus occurs in groups. It is a large and attractive species with a cap 60-90mm across, yellowish brown, later darker brown cracked with age and turning black, flesh turning grey-black when cut. Tubes are a rather bright yellow. Stipe 120mm, typically fusiform with broadest part below the middle, creamy-white at apex pale chrome-yellow below, minutely squamulose. (Kibby 2012a) A thermophilous species of deciduous forests, typically oak. Rather rare over most of Britain.

Boletus reticulatus Schaeff. - Summer Bolete



Boletus reticulatus is a large fungus, sometimes referred to as the Summer Cep as it is similar to its close relative *Boletus edulis*, the Cep or Penny Bun. This was formerly called *Boletus aestivalis* and is often found under this name in older books.

An uncommon species in Britain, *Boletus reticulatus* is much more common in southern Europe. It is a mycorrhizal species found in broadleaf woodlands with beech and oak. It is not uncommon in Wyre Forest but normally fruits early in the season and under oak trees. Typically just one or two specimens are found, unlike other boletes that tend to occur in troops. Many boletes are ectomycorrhizal fungi, forming mutualistic relationships with the root systems of trees. The fungi help trees to obtain moisture and minerals from the soil and in return the root system of the tree delivers nutrients. The specific epithet *reticulatus* is a reference to the strongly reticulated or net-like pattern on the stem of this bolete. (Buczacki et al, 2013)

Features that help distinguish *Boletus reticulatus* from *Boletus edulis* are the absence of a broad pale band around the cap rim; initially velvety cap surface, which



often wrinkles and sometimes cracks with age; and a white or pale brown net-like pattern that usually extends well down the stem and sometimes right to the base. (Kibby 2012a).

Tylopilus felleus (Bull.) P. Karst., - the Bitter Bolete

This is a species of both conifer and deciduous woodlands although I have hardly even recorded *Tylopilus felleus* in Wyre Forest over some 30 years of looking. The cap is brown, some 50-70mm across, the pores are white turning pink with age, an unusual colour and quite distinctive. The stipe has a prominent coarse netlike pattern. This fungus lives up to the name and the pores especially are extremely bitter to the taste. This species tends to fruit early and can occur under oak but more often in mature conifer plantations. The most recent find was at Eymore Woods where it appears to grow near old rotten conifer stumps.

Tricholoma sejunctum Sowerby Quél - Deceiving Knight



This summer fruiting species is found in deciduous woodland and often under beech. It is rather rare in Wyre Forest. I have only three records and two occurred in 2013, so clearly we had an interesting summer flush of fungi this year. Most books suggest it prefers a basic or lime-rich soil type, so Wyre Forest is not ideal. The cap is yellowish green darker at the centre and radially streaked with a white stipe with a flush of yellow. It was recorded in 1902 by W. B. Allen from the Wyre Forest, so despite so few records it clearly has a long presence in the forest.

Lactarius azonites (Bull.) Fr

This is a fawn brown milkcap with a milk that turns pink in contact with the gills. It is never common in Wyre Forest but turns up every few years or so. My first record was from 1984 under hazel. On a foray this year in Wyre Forest with a friend of mine, Robin Jones, who now resides in Scotland, we walked up a track where he remembered finding the fungus years ago in the 1980s. Remarkably, much to his amazement, we found some



specimens a few metres from where he first found it. He hadn't seen the species for years, so this was a nice find and a remarkable occurrence at an old site.

Marasmius curreyi Berk. & Broome Ann.



This was found later in the season on 14th September by Susan Limbrey on a WFSG outdoor meeting. This tiny fungus was spotted amongst grass on which it grows, and rushes on one of the mown areas or 'flats' along the Dowles Brook at Wimperhill Wood. I had never seen this species before despite it being distinctive and easy to identify. The cap is 4mm. across, pinky/orange, and has a bristle-like black stipe. Although not rare it is hardly ever recorded due to the small size, so well spotted by Susan. The late Malcolm Clarke in his Fungus Flora of Warwickshire managed to record it quite often in this nearby county. There are only two previous records for Shropshire. (Mantle 2011).

References and Reading

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