

Foray at Rushmere Estate on September 28th, 2014

Penny Cullington

A small group, just six of us, met up at this impressive country park with a good mix of habitats to explore, though the previous dry weeks (in fact now officially the driest September on record) proved to have taken their toll on fungal fruiting, and we did rather struggle. Our modest list of just over fifty species at this species-rich site reflects both the unfavourable conditions and maybe the fewer number of forayers too. It was, however, great to be led round by Justin who knows the site well and had planned our route.



Above: *Sparassis crispa* under Pine (photo PC)

We started off with a species always nice to see: *Sparassis crispa* (Wood cauliflower) growing under Pine at the roadside. Its common names is apt though this specimen was getting past its sell-by date and was a bit brown and shrivelled at the edges.



Below: *Lyophyllum connatum* on a grass pile (photo PC)

The next point of interest: some large piles of grass cuttings from a nearby meadow which were almost hay and beginning to rot down. We found several things of interest growing on them: starting with the smallest, *Psilocybe merdaria* – a little brown fungus having very dark spores and which grows on dung, reflecting no doubt the rabbits which had been visiting the heaps. Next up in size was another brown species, this one with blotchy grey gills: *Panaeolus fimicola* (Turf mottlegill). One of the heaps was liberally scattered with clumps of a whitish species which I mistakenly thought at home must be *Clitocybe rivulosa* (Fool's Funnel). However, Derek later identified it as probably *Lyophyllum connatum* (White domecap) – more fool me!

Also on the heaps we found several collections of *Coprinus/-opsis/-ellus* (Ink caps) of various sorts; these are somewhat specialised to identify and were passed on to Derek later in the day in the hope that he might be left with more than a few pools of black ink to examine to give us species

names: sadly only one was identifiable, this was *Coprinopsis patouillardii* agg.



The largest species on the heaps was one normally found on woodchips; only added to the British list ten years ago, it is rapidly spreading due to the popularity of woodchips in gardens and parks. It was a surprise, therefore, to find *Agrocybe rivulosa* (Wrinkled fieldcap) growing on the top of one of the grass heaps.

Left: *Agrocybe rivulosa* growing on one of the grass heaps (photo JE)



Left: Forayers exploring the grass heaps today at Rushmere Estate (photo MJ)

Along the road Joanna picked up a small specimen looking similar to a species of *Mycena* (Bonnetcap) with cap only 1.5cm across, and growing on a bit of woody debris. This, however, had pink gills which were free, pointing

to the genus *Pluteus*. When examined at home this keyed out to *P. hispidulus*, not common with only two previous county records. The cap has an unusual surface, rather hairy fibrillose with a darkish centre and paler outer zone; this I attempted to capture using my dissecting scope (only fairly successfully).

Right: cap detail of *Pluteus hispidulus* found by Joanna today (photo PC)



In a grassy patch Justin found several specimens of a genus quite close to *Lepiota* (i.e. having free white gills and a stem with a ring). This was the typical grassland species *Cystoderma amianthinum* (Earthy powdercap). I was hopeful on further examination at home that it might prove to be the rarer *C. jasonis* which has very unusual special spores on the cap surface (called arthrospores) which are rectangular, but they

were not to be found, so it remains as first named.



Left: *Cystoderma amianthinum*, a fairly common species of grassland. The rather dusty coating on the cap, white gills which are free, together with a ring on the stem are characters which make it recognisable in the field. Another rarer species of the genus, *C. jasonis*, is more-or-less identical apart from the arthrospores which can be found on the cap with a microscope. (photo PC)

Justin was keen to show us something he'd found on an earlier visit, in the hope that it might get named. This was some tiny white-stemmed fruitbodies covering rabbit dung under the canopy of some dense Spruce trees. Being far from my area of expertise I thought it extremely unlikely I would be able to name it, and this proved to be the case. I did come to a name though don't trust that I have it correct, and am still hopeful that Derek might have more luck with the specimens handed on to him afterwards, though as they are neither Basidiomycetes nor Ascomycetes we are both rather floundering out of our depths – don't hold your breath!



Unidentified miniscule fruitbodies growing on rabbit dung today. If they get named, I will mention it in a later foray report. (photo MJ)

This being a site with a predominance of conifers, it was not surprising that we found several species which have a preference for this substrate. One was *Rhodocollybia* (previously *Collybia*) *maculata* (Cocoa spot) – this can be found under deciduous trees also but I find it more commonly under conifer. Points of identification to notice are the extremely crowded gills when young and the cocoa-coloured spotting which develops on the cap (and in this case on the gills as well).



Above: *Rhodocollybia maculata* under the pines today (photo PC)



Strobilurus esculentus (Sprucecone cap), as its common name suggests - a species found exclusively on fallen Spruce cones, turned up several times though the first few we found appeared to be just on the litter (no doubt the cones had almost rotted away). Then we came across a large cone with two fruitbodies which proved the point conclusively.

Strobilurus esculentus on a spruce cone (photo MJ)

We concluded the foray with another conifer species which Justin took us to see: *Chroogomphus rutilus* (Copper spike) growing under the Pines near the car park, not recorded here before and with only four other known Bucks sites.



***Chroogomphus rutilus* found under the Pines at Rushmere Estate today (photo MJ)**

Many thanks to all who attended – everyone made valuable contributions to our list, and a particular thank you to non-members Michael Jackson and Jon Emmony for their photos.

See the complete list for more details of what we found.