

Foray at Naphill Common on Sunday October 26th, 2014

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A sizeable group of us met up at the Village Hall on a fine morning - over 40 people of which about a quarter were BFG members, the rest either Friends of Naphill Common or extras who came along to give us a trial run. We were lead round expertly by Peter who knows the site like the back of his hand, thus Derek and I could focus on giving forayers our full attention. We were kept pretty busy though fruiting was certainly not plentiful. As usual when both of us are leading, we encouraged people to ask both of us independently for names; the advantages of this are twofold: firstly it's always a good idea to have more than one opinion when identifying in the field, and secondly it proves to the doubters that we're not just picking random Latin names willy-nilly out of the air! As with our other recent forays it soon became clear that small things growing in leaf litter were faring much better than the larger mycorrhizal species which were decidedly thin on the ground. Sadly it's rather looking as if the latter have either shot their bolt or given up the idea of fruiting for this autumn. (I hope I shall be proved wrong on this.)

With such a good number of eyes searching we were able to list 70 species in the field, and with work on specimens at home later this crept up to 92, of which 21 were new to the site - not a bad haul for what is now generally considered to be a somewhat disappointing season for fungi. Most were fairly mundane species, however, but this never matters when even the common things are of interest and often amazing to forayers who are relatively new to looking at fungi. One of the commonest species was *Mycena arcangeliana* (Angel's bonnets) typically growing clustered on



Mycena arcangeliana which was very common today. (photoTM)

fallen wood. I included a photo of very young material of this species in last week's report for Mousells Wood, but thought it worth having another photo of more mature and faded specimens here. The typical purplish stem is still apparent but its olive beige cap colour has all but disappeared.

We identified ten different species of *Mycena* (Bonnetts) in all, some growing on wood, others on soil or leaf litter, though only a few had distinctive characters one can spot in the field. *Mycena galopus* (Milking bonnet) obligingly showed its white 'juice' emanating from the broken stem to a few people, but surprisingly for Chiltern woodland *Mycena crocata* (Saffrondrop bonnet) with its startling orange juice was absent – presumably we were not amongst Beech trees, the fallen branches of which this species depends upon.

Few Inkcaps were found, but one was *Coprinopsis picacea* (Magpie Inkcaps) – this is clearly enjoying a good year, and we also found the common *Coprinellus micaceus* (Glistening Inkcaps). In Neil's excellent photo below one can see the tiny specks of 'veil' still visible on the cap surface which give this species its common name.



Coprinellus micaceus fruiting today at Naphill Common. (photoNF)



Macrolepiota procera showing the typical snakeskin stem markings to look out for to avoid confusion with the similar *Chlorophyllum rhacodes*. (photo PC)

We found two species of Parasols, and it was good to be able to demonstrate how to tell them apart as several of them are considered good edible species though one (probably just as often eaten!) is not advised and can cause gastric upsets. Looking with care at the stem is the first step, and if the beige 'snakeskin' markings (seen clearly in the photo here) are absent you are likely to have *Chlorophyllum rhacodes* (Shaggy parasol), the one that should not be eaten. Further confirmation of this is easy to check: break open the cap and within a few seconds the white flesh will start turning bright orange. The edible species of Parasol (*Macrolepiota procera*, *konradii* and *mastoidea*) lack this change of flesh colour and all have snakeskin markings on the stem. I can only reiterate here the need for extreme caution when collecting for the pot. There are dangerously poisonous fungi about, and we collected one of them today – a species of *Clitocybe* (Funnel) with a white cap and pinkish sloping gills which is all too easy to mistake for the edible and much prized *Clitopilus prunulus* (The miller). The only clear difference between them in the field is in the smell: mealy in the miller but sweetish in the funnel, and the spores should always be checked with a microscope to be really

sure which of them you have. You have been warned! Do not take chances when your health, even your life, could be at stake.

Despite the general lack of mycorrhizal species (those growing on tree roots) we did find several different species of *Russula* (Brittlegills) though they were mostly singletons and also very eaten, no doubt reflecting the short supply of this regular autumn fare enjoyed by squirrels, mice, slugs and the like. This genus with its often bright cap colours and crumbly pale gills is usually easy to recognise (though often not to identify to species), but one we found is not very typical and has a

brown sticky cap and an unpleasant slightly cheesy smell. There are several species of *Russula* with this type of smell, affectionately called ‘the smellies’, often growing under Oak as was today’s collection. At home I put a drop of guaiac, a stain, on the stem and it turned instantly blue-green – a reaction typical of *Russula amoenolens* (Camembert brittlegill), one of two species very similar in appearance, though the other and much rarer one, *R. sororia* (Sepia brittlegill), entirely lacks this colour reaction to guaiac.



Russula amoenolens growing under Oak today, showing the blue-green guaiac reaction on the stem. (photo PC)

Several brackets were collected, one being *Daedaleopsis confragosa* (Blushing bracket) – a specimen which was young and fresh enough to live up to its apt common name.



Daedaleopsis confragosa, above left the top view, and right the underside ‘blushing’ where pressed with a thumb. (photo TM)

The area which produced the most interesting species was the pond perimeter where four quite unusual things turned up. The first was a clump of striking quite large yellow fruitbodies with long orange stems - they foxed both Derek and me at the time. This took time at home to solve and



eventually we agreed that it was *Pholiota alnicola* (Alder scalycap). The common name is, however, somewhat misleading in two ways: this is a species found with several tree species, not just Alder, and today was with Willow, furthermore though the genus *Pholiota* contains many scaly-capped species they are by no means all so, and this one has a smooth cap!

Pholiota alnicola found today with Willow (the photo taken at Stoke Common with Birch PC)

Two more species from soil under the Willows at the pond were *Hebeloma helodes* and *Naucoria salicis*, both small and fairly insignificant in appearance but with under 100 national records so not that common. Finally to the collection which caused Derek and me the most headache and found by one of our forayers: a species again on soil at the pond edge which looked to us like some sort of *Hypholoma* (ie Sulphurtuft genus) but was unfamiliar. We both spent a fair amount of time with books and scopes, then ended up emailed each other to say we were stuck! I was determined to solve the mystery as we had a nice collection of fruitbodies plus a photo, and there were distinctive microscopic characters which surely must lead to a conclusion. With a fresh



go the next morning I eventually got somewhere and realised that there could well be a slip in the description of this particular species in the main reference book which was possibly causing both of us to discount it. So after more consultation we are agreed that we have *Hypholoma ericaeoides* - a species found sometimes in grassland but also (and significantly) often in damp places, pond edges in woodland.

***Hypholoma ericaeoides* - an unusual species growing around the pond perimeter today. (photo PC)**

Many thanks to the attendees, all of whom contributed to our lengthy list of species today. We've added considerably to the site records. Thanks also for the photos supplied by Neil Fletcher and Tony Marshall – it is always tricky at a busy foray like today's to find the time to take photos as well as keeping the list and helping with explanations.

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