

Pembrokeshire Fungus Recording Network

(www.pembsfungi.org.uk)

Newsletter (2/2009)

Records

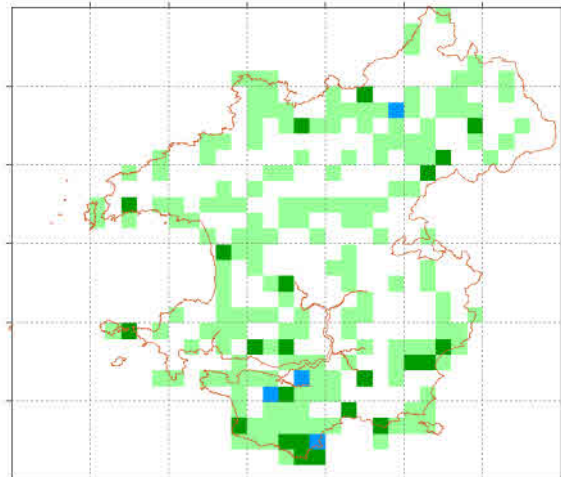
Network members contributed 885 records in 2008 - of which three quarters were from the waxcap-grassland suite of fungi. However, it was encouraging to see an increasing number of other species being recorded - helped in no small way by Mike Karpaty's enthusiasm for trees, and the expertise of a number of visiting mycologists through the year.

An indication of our progress towards County-wide coverage can be seen in the Diversity map which shows the number of different "waxcap-grassland" species recorded in each tetrad (2 km x 2 km). There are still a few notable gaps - can you help with records for these less-well recorded areas?

The light green squares denote 1-19 species, dark green: 20-39 species and blue: 40 or more.

Notable sites contributing towards the blue tetrads include:

- Crymych cemetery
- Military cemetery (Pembroke Dock)
- Somerton Farm (Hundleton)
- Stackpole Warren



The Flask Earthstar - *Geastrum lageniforme*

The chore of feeding cattle at Somerton through the winter occasionally brings pleasant mycological surprises (but not often!). In this case, after moving a feed rack, a group of 10 earthstars was revealed at the base of a hedge. Although they looked superficially like the fairly common Collared Earthstar (*Geastrum triplex*), these specimens were all rather small, with the spore-sac measuring between 15 and 20 mm. in diameter.



Subsequent observation of the fruitbodies, and microscopic inspection of the internal structure, revealed these features were consistent with *Geastrum lageniforme* - a **red data list** species with only 2 previous records from Wales. Samples were sent to Kew for confirmation and have been retained as voucher specimens.



Geastrum lageniforme - detail and habitat

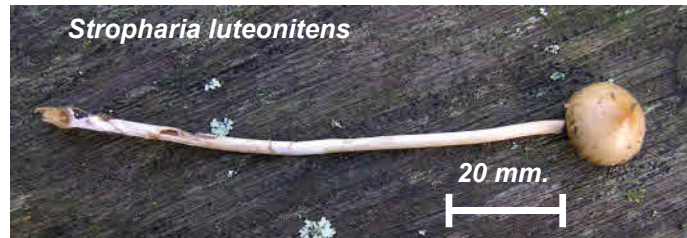
Dung fungi

Much of our attention is focussed on "waxcap-grassland" species, but Eef Arnolds' presentation last year alerted us to another group of threatened grassland species: dung fungi. Eef made the point that changes in farming practice mean that, for example, cattle dung is often far less fibrous and solid than it would be if the animals were fed by traditional methods. Modern high-protein supplementary feeds, and nitrogen-enriched grass and silage, provide a diet quite different to that which cattle would have been accustomed in the past. This change in composition of the dung may well affect the development of some fungus species.

Later that week, Eef collected a specimen of *Stropharia luteonitens* from Stackpole Warren. After confirming the sample identification, the Fungus Records Database for Britain and Ireland was checked - and only one other Welsh record found (Whiteford Burrows NNR, Glam. 1991). In spite of this, it seems that the Stackpole sample was not the first Pembrokeshire record, as British Fungus Flora, vol 5 (1987) indicates that the species (then known as *Psilocybe luteonitens*) was recorded on Skokholm Island by A. F. Parker-Rhodes. Parker-Rhodes was a regular visitor to Skokholm and published a series of papers detailing his fungus observations on Skokholm from 1949 to 1957.

It is notable that, even by 1987, the BFF5 reference describes the species as "...known from several localities but rarely seen recently...."

This is certainly a species we should look out for - especially in grassland enriched with herbivore dung. Key features are a viscid, buff-grey cap with slight umbo, broadly attached gills, ivory later brown, and very large spores (15-20 x 9-11.5 um), usually two-spored basidia.



Autumn 2009 programme

Details of our autumn grassland and woodland forays will be published towards the end of the summer. In addition to the forays, two special events are being planned - both based at Stackpole:

A weekend residential grassland foray will be held on the weekend of 23/25th October. Our guests for the event will be Shelley Evans (former Conservation Adviser for the British Mycological Society) and Dr. Peter Roberts (former Senior Mycologist at Kew). If anyone would like more information - please let me know and I will send you the outline programme and booking details. We have managed to keep the fully inclusive charge for the weekend to just £80 per person to encourage local enthusiasts to fully participate in the event. The weekend will provide an excellent opportunity to see a wide range of grassland fungi and share hints and tips on their identification.

The second event is still under consideration and will depend on the level of interest shown. It will take the form of a full-day foray during October or early November. This is specifically intended for local members wishing to learn more about grassland fungus identification. The plan is to conduct the foray at Stackpole in the morning, then adjourn for a light lunch and indoor session at the Stackpole Centre during which samples will be laid out for inspection and identification. If you think you would like to be involved in this - then please let Jane, Trevor or me know so we can establish how many people might participate.

Sponsorship

One of the challenges to face us each year is that of raising funds to support training and recording events and the production of printed material to help promote the conservation of fungi in Pembrokeshire. All of the work carried out by Network members is on a volunteer basis.

I am pleased to say we've started 2009 on a very positive footing with the Chevron Oil company continuing its financial support for our activities. We also completed a report on the waxcap-grassland fungi on Stackpole Warren which was commissioned by the Countryside Council for Wales.

Discussions are continuing with other potential funding organisations which should ensure an active autumn programme.



David Harries (February 2009)