

Gamston Wood, Retford, NFG Foray 27th May 2023

About 12 members and visitors turned out at this venue on a warm sunny morning. The weather had been very dry for more than two weeks so we thought that fungi might be thin on the ground. In this we were largely correct, but we did find some interesting things.

Fomes fomentarius (Hoof Fungus) and *Piptoporus betulinus* (Birch Polypore) were quickly recorded in the beech stand by Neil King, both growing on fallen birch trunks. Another common black-brown fungus, *Daldinia concentrica* (King Alfred's Cakes) was also recorded here on a substrate uncommon for it, a fallen birch branch. Usually, it grows on ash wood. Ann Ward found good examples of *Xylaria carpophila* (Beechmast Candlesnuff) on fallen beech husks, a very small relation of the common, larger antler fungus *Xylaria hypoxylon*. Found near here too on dead and fallen hazel branches was *Hypoxylon fuscum* (Hazel Woodwart), dark brown circular warts favouring hazel as a substrate. Another of the same genus was recorded by Ann on a cut willow branch, its obligate host, *Hypoxylon bullata* (Willow Barkspot), blackish, circular, rather flattened warts. More common species seen on wood were *Exidia glandulosa* (Witches' Butter) on hazel, black and shrunken by the dry conditions; and *Auricularia auricula-judae* (Jelly Ear) on dead elder wood; while *Rhopoglyphus filicinus* (Bracken Map) was recorded on several dead standing bracken stems. A bright golden yellow rust fungus was seen by Neil on a living bramble stem, *Kuehneola uredinis* (pale Bramble Rust), its usual host.

Near the entrance, Agnieszka Kiely collected, on a rotten fallen twig, some tightly clustered black granules seated on a black hairy mat (subiculum) – *Chaetosphaerella phaeostroma*. Not uncommon but not easily spotted either. On the black base of a bracken stem pulled up for me by Neil we found the really minute white discs of *Micropodia pteridina*, so tiny that they can be missed in full view unless you are looking out for them.

For the keenest eyes, the prize must go to Phoebe Zadik – so often children spot things adults easily overlook. She showed me a fragment of beech bark no more than 2 cms long and on this was a mix of the pale orange discs of *Orbilbia auricolor* and the white-rimmed grey discs of *Mollisia ligni*, neither fungus exceeding 1mm in diameter. Among them was a third fungus, a hyphomycete, which I saw only by looking at the piece of wood later through the microscope – *Brachysporium nigrum* (see picture) producing large barrel-shaped pale brown conidia with transparent ends. So, three for the price of one on a tiny bit of bark. Very well spotted!

All in all, a very pleasant walk around part of this very rich Notts Wildlife nature reserve which also gave us the bonus of Common Spotted Orchids in flower and a Broad-leaved Helleborine not yet quite out.

Howard Williams