

North Eastern Fungus Study Group

Newsletter 57 April 2010



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North Eastern Fungus Study Group Minutes of the 13th AGM held at Rainton Meadows on Saturday 6th March 2010 at 11.a.m.

1 Apologies for absence:

Val Standen, Gordon Beakes, Pat Wood, Joan Vickers, Gwen Humble, Peter Holmes and Robert Woods. 23 members attended.

2 Minutes of the 12th AGM meeting:

Accepted as accurate.

3 Matters arising: -

4(a) Website: Keith Cunningham noted that there was a problem with our use of Ordnance Survey maps in the Newsletters. Although we had permission to use them for issuing to the NEFSG members, we were not covered to allow open access via the Website. Those members who did not have their unique password for access to our Member's page on our website were asked to contact Keith.

7b – it was decided not to progress this item

7c - completed

4 Election of Officers

Following the November Committee meeting at which Alan Simkins volunteered to undertake the Chairman's post (subject to AGM acceptance), the Committee proposed that the following be considered for election at the AGM. Officers: Chairman – Alan Simkins; Treasurer - Tom Kirby; and Secretary- Alan Bunn. Committee members proposed were: Keith Cunningham, Andy McLay, Gordon Simpson, Alan Legg and Babs Walton. The members present at this AGM approved these appointments. At this point in the meeting Alan Simkins took over as Chairman.

5 Confirmed Programme for 2010 events:

6th March A.G.M plus other items at Rainton Meadows.

8th May Spring Foray at Foxglove Covert at Catterick Camp (AMc)

June 12th Social Lunch at Alnmouth (TK)

July 24th Stanhope Burn (A Mc)

Sep 11th Kiplin Hall Woods nr Northallerton (GS)

Sep 25th Plessey Woods (GS plus new member Ron Pattinson)

Oct 9th Cockfield Fell (Rachel R)

Oct 23rd Rothbury (GS)

Nov 6th Gibside, National Trust (A Mc)

Nov 20th Indoor Meeting / Open Forum at Hamsterley

Note all meetings start at 11am except the Social Lunch, the commencement time of which will be

announced in the Newsletter.

The Plessey Wood event will incur a car parking fee and it was agreed that this would be taken from NEFSG funds. Gordon S. reported that on the Rothbury trip the local National Park wardens will, if required, transport members in their Landrover up the steep hill at the beginning of the walk.

The Treasurer reported that the Social Lunch was further north than had been previous such occasions but he urged members to support this event, with partners if you wished, and make early bookings with him.

More details of these trips will be included in the Newsletters which will issued shortly before the events and be included on our Website.

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A Pen-Portrait

As the NEFSG continues to increase in numbers, it will become more difficult for some of us to remember who is who, particularly as few of us can attend every meeting....a reasonable excuse for forgetfulness!



Some time ago, Alan Bunn set out to encourage members to offer up a little information about themselves for publishing in the Newsletter, in an effort to keep us all a little closer together as a group. These "Pen Portraits" were accompanied by a photograph and several members have contributed over the past year or two.

For this issue, Aubrey Colling submitted an article in which he describes his recording methods and gives examples of his technique for photographing spores (See article following). This informative missive also gives a fascinating insight into one aspect of the lives of Aubrey and Edith. After reading the article I contacted

Alan Bunn and we agreed between us that a "Pen-Portrait" could easily be derived from Aubrey's submission. With considerable candour and some hard-to-overcome modesty, Aubrey agreed to have his picture taken... the rest will be history!

TAK

AN INTRODUCTION TO KEEPING RECORDS OF FUNGI

By Aubrey Colling

The committee has asked me to describe the methods I use for recording fungi. First of all, let me admit to a preoccupation with keeping records. I think it began on joining the RAF. When my father was seeing me on to the train he suggested I should keep a diary of my experiences. Very soon there was a delay in our training and a few of us were asked to help administer aptitude tests to potential aircrew. We were left with much spare time and formed an unofficial study group that met every day. These young airmen, likewise afflicted, were all keeping diaries that rapidly expanded to include reviews of books, plays, films etc.. We even wrote essays and enjoyed criticising each other's work. All had spent some time at a university so it was quite a lively group (one member subsequently became headmaster of a well known public school). The break in our training lasted several months after which time we went our separate ways. For me the die was cast.

When my professional life began I entered medical practice and a new opportunity arose. I used a modified International Classification of Disease to record every disease or disorder in patients I saw. My partners adopted the discipline and it became a permanent feature of the way we worked. We summarised events each year and could access any particular disease for study. Of course, we didn't have computers but it was surprising what could be achieved with pen and ink.

All was not lost when I retired. Edith had always been a good amateur botanist and I began to photograph flowers she recognised and established a database on the computer containing flowers from Europe, The Mediterranean, S. Africa, Zimbabwe and Namibia.

We also had records since 1977 of the breeding of *Gavia stellata* (Red-throated Diver) on the Hebridean island of Islay. We now had time to make more detailed observations. No comprehensive list of lochs was available. Since we intended to visit all lochs during the breeding season I suggested we might make a complete record as we went along. The Natural History Trust on the island agreed and gave help, lending us large scale maps (6 in. to 1 mile) and providing access to previous records. The following data were recorded for all lochs visited: grid reference, general description and photograph, height above sea level, area, length of shoreline, pH, and water temperature. We found ourselves visiting more than 220 lochs, some many times, often in high hills. It took longer than we thought but in 1999 we were able to present the Field Centre in Port Charlotte, Islay with all the loch data in 3 volumes. (1) It also contains our own breeding records of *Gavia stellata* as well as others we could find. Copies of the databases are available in their library. (1,2,3)

And yet another database records the travels of a sailing group of 10 men who have sailed together for 34 years. We call ourselves The Auks; the group has explored the Western seaboard from Ile de Seine in France, Northwards to the Scillies, Ireland, The Hebrides, Orkney, Fairisle and Norway. I give this background to show 'where I have come from', in current jargon.

And so we arrived at fungi; what a wonderful jungle was there to be recorded. They had been studied in great detail but I knew at once that to progress I must establish my own database. My initial contacts with the North Eastern Study Group were very encouraging. Members were very eager to help and didn't object too much if a scientific name was forgotten, or even a common name (though these were rather frowned on).

I first of all designed a form; a modified version was published in Newsletter 53. Ideally it should be used in the field to provide a reminder of the important facts to be considered. In practice, there is limited time on a foray to attend to every detail, important though they all are. A short entry into a small notebook is often all that is convenient. However, the form remains my basic record and I try to make some initial notes, in the field if possible, but then more detailed descriptions at home that day. Some fungi change very rapidly. I file these forms in reverse date order.

I always take photographs; I try to obtain pictures to show features to aid recognition. With digital cameras of high sensitivity it is possible to photograph in nearly dark conditions. Additional photos can be taken later under studio conditions (often the kitchen). I set up a slide to collect spores as soon as possible. I always examine the slide after a few hours as some fungi soon drop dense spores making microscopy difficult. Others may take 12-24 or even 48 hours. Sometimes there is no discernable print. But you may be lucky making a microscopic search - it may reveal a few spores.

Sometimes I take a photo of the spore print, using a microscope slide on a black, non-reflective background. Photographing the spores is trickier. It is important to have a camera with a lens small enough to adapt to the microscope eyepiece. I bought a compact camera that fits just within the eyepiece. One or two layers of added tape gives quite a snug result. Special adapters are available for different cameras but *they* are expensive. I tried one but it took so long to fix up that I found it much quicker to hold the camera by hand, assisted by a small tripod for added stability. A large circular image will then be in view. The spores will be very small but can be enlarged several times before the picture is taken. Using the grid in the background (see below) the image can be centralised and a suitable portion selected, edited and photographed. The image taken at this stage may then be further enlarged if it can be done without distortion. The spores may then be measured and described either on camera or computer.

Before reaching this point more work will need to be done to enable precise measurement of the fungus. First, the microscope will need an eyepiece lens with a graticule engraved on it. Second, a stage micrometer is needed to place on the stage. This is a slide engraved with a rule to show a scale in microns ($1\text{ mm}=1000\text{ microns}$). The slide I possess shows a $10\text{ mm rule} = 0.1\text{ mm}$ and it has 100 divisions, each one a micron. When viewed through the eyepiece both scales are visible. Zero of both scales are lined up. The eyepiece reading can then be set against the stage scale to read off microns. Fractions of microns can be estimated by eye. To avoid using the stage micrometer for every fungus to be measured, a graph or reference table can be prepared to relate the raw measurements taken from the eyepiece scale to the true scale in microns. Once determined, these figures should remain constant. However, a different graph or reference table must be prepared for each lens combination. Thereafter, only the eyepiece grid is used to measure the spores and converted to microns using the table or graph. The stage micrometer should be kept in a safe place (They cost about £20).

I usually measure 8 spores giving a range of readings suitable for my purpose. I believe 24 is the recommended number but when I have done that number I found that I could have got away with fewer. The spores will be lying in all directions. Rather than turning the eyepiece to align each individual spore to the grid for measurement it is easier to prepare an appropriate length of scale, say 10 divisions on a small card that can be readily rotated to the axis of the spore on the screen. It is important to check the card readings at each session as I have found the zoom control on the camera and computer vary slightly in their magnification. The ratio remains the same but not the zoom. As a guide, my tables range from 1.0-10.9(eyepiece reading) to 2.5- 27.314 microns). The table can still be used for fungi outside of these ranges simply by moving the decimal place by 1 to the left or right.

An example of a photographic record is shown. I use Adobe Photoshop. I begin with a white background the size of my expected print, usually 5 x 7 inches. Pictures are edited and cropped to appropriate sizes to fill the 5 x 7 space. Guides are easy to place on the background for the various sizes. When the pictures are dragged into

the desired position they will be snapped precisely to the guides. Each one adds a new layer to the background. (If the background resolution differs from the resolution of the photograph being inserted it can be overcome by selecting the photo in Photoshop, then edit/transform/scale; handles will appear which enable the photo to be dragged to the corners of the designated space.) When all is complete, the layers created should be 'flattened' for printing. My database is held on Microsoft Office Access. Once a year I print out in Excel.

Photographs are archived in A-Z folders (by scientific name). Printed photographs are stored vertically in a deep tray- they are easier to get at like this. This may seem very daunting but it is very logical and I would be pleased to demonstrate it to anyone interested.

I agreed to write down my experiences with fungi because I thought there may be some who are starting and looking for help. When I began, I received considerable support from Alan Bunn for which I was very grateful. Since then I have been much helped by Alan Legg, Gordon Simpson, & Tom Kirby whose enthusiasm first attracted my wife and I to mushrooms. Indeed, all members have been most helpful.

We would be pleased to see anyone who wished to come and see us at East Rounton.

1. Fresh Water Lochs of Islay (1999) 3 volumes
2. Breeding of Red-throated Divers *Gavia stellata* on Islay 1992--1998 Argyll Bird Report (2000) 16:109-116
3. Breeding of Red-throated Divers *Gavia stellata* on Islay in 2002 Argyll Bird Report (2002) 18:121-122

Aubrey Colling



A Little Romance..

Last year, new member Andrew Fox took this picture of a *Stropharia.sp* in a very grassy location on Tunstall Hill, Sunderland. At the time, there was a marked sparsity of specimens and it was only sheer good luck that this beautiful fungi was found.

Andrew wrote later,

"The colours are amazing; turquoise is a very unusual colour in nature: 'Verdigris' is the common name for the green coating or patina formed when copper, brass or bronze is weathered and exposed to air or seawater over a period of time. I could have photographed this find all day. I thought the cap looked rather like waves lapping around a coral island. It's easy to get carried away with a species such as this..."

So say we all.

Alan Legg has written some useful notes on the identification of the three "greenish" *Stropharia* which you hopefully come across during foraging in Britain. You will find the notes on Page 10.

Continued from Page 2

6 Treasurer's Report

The Treasurer reported that as of Jan.1st 2009 the Group has £948 in-hand and following expenditure of a total of £441 on expenses, printing and miscellaneous purchases, by the end of 2009 we had £507. This amount will be increased as the 2010 subscriptions are received. The Treasurer informed the meeting that financially we were in a strong position and his report was accepted by the meeting.

7 A.O.B.

a) Alan Legg reported to the meeting that NEFSG member Hewett Ellis, who was a founder member of the Group, had discovered a new gall fly on the Northumberland coast. AL will obtain more details from Hewitt and write an article for the Newsletter.

b) Alan L. recommended an inexpensive book on identification of Agarics and Boletes written by another of our members, Archie McAdam of Skipton. The booklet costs around £4 and can be obtained from Pendleside Books.

c) AL also reported that the British Mycology Society's Field Mycology publication had included a review of a new *Inocybe* key.

d) The Secretary suggested that moving the AGM to early March may have benefits such as milder weather and encourage increased participation. After some discussion on this topic it was agreed to have the AGM in March with an additional topic, such as a slide presentation. In addition it is planned to have an indoor meeting in Jan/Feb which would be a workshop/ forum on appropriate topics such as microscopy, photography, how to use identification keys etc.

e) Gordon Simpson had brought several books to the meeting for members to look at and evaluate; he commented that he found the Collins Complete British Mushrooms and Toadstools, The Essential Photograph Guide to Britain's Fungi a very useful book for ID purposes.

f) Keith Cunningham raised the following issues relating to the NEFSG website

i) He reminded members of the issue of OS maps and access to them for non members

ii) Keith stated that other Mycological websites included articles on specific topics and he suggested that we have many of this type which had been previously published in our Newsletters; with no or minor modification, subject to author's permission, some of these could be placed on our website.

iii) Keith noted the large amount of effort that Gordon S. and Babs had put in on the database and that our records are now included in the CATE database of the Association of British Fungus Groups (ABFG). Our Treasurer stated that the CATE database was very user friendly and as the Rainton Meadows venue has internet access it would be possible to run workshops on the CATE database at future indoor meetings.

iv) Photographs would be welcome for inclusion on the website, AL would check IDs before hand.

v) The issue of including lists of species from forays was raised and received a fairly lengthy discussion. Publication of provisional lists which did not include species where additional ID studies were required seemed to be possible; when the 'problem' specimens were identified these could be included in the later Newsletter. The advantage of such a system to newer /less skilled members was supported by several members present. At the end of the lengthy discussion on this topic it was agreed that the Committee would attempt to resolve this issue at its April meeting.

vi) Keith noted that the late Dorothy Wolfe's paintings of fungi had been very well received when her book was published and he felt inclusion of these paintings on the NEFSG website would expose Dorothy's work to a much wider audience. The meeting agreed with Keith's sentiments and he offered to make contact with Jack, Dorothy's husband, regarding approval etc.

g) Alan Simkins, our new Chairman, expressed the Group's thanks to Gordon Simpson for his leadership over the previous years.

8 Date of the next Annual General Meeting

As agreed in Minute 7d of this meeting it was decided to have the 2011 AGM in March and Saturday 5th March 2011 at Rainton Meadows, commencing at 11-00 a.m. was agreed.

Alan Bunn
Hon. Sec.

ON REFLECTION

It is often said that digital cameras have revolutionised photography; a cliché with a simplistic ring of truth but not entirely correct. Good photography was never that dependent upon the camera, but more on subject matter and to a greater extent, technique. The camera was merely a tool.

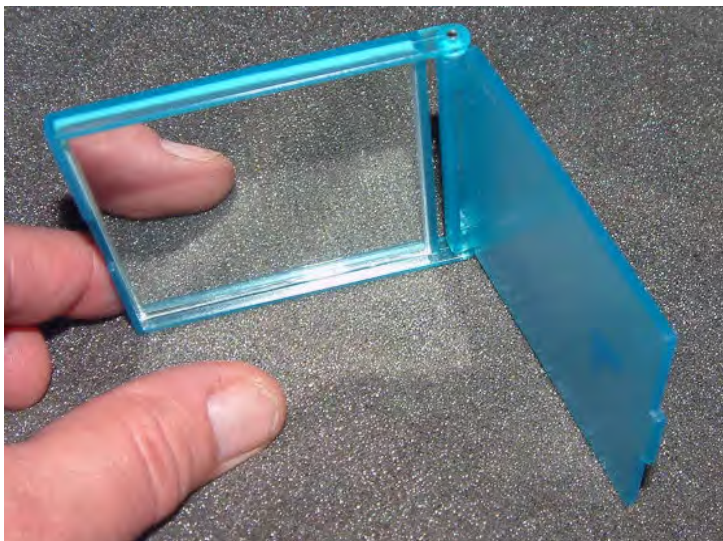
What is certainly true is that digital cameras have revolutionised the taking of *snapshots*. No longer bound by the need to buy "film" (whatever that was) we can all snap away in the happy knowledge that we are capturing images which are as transient or as permanent as we wish; virtual images that can be disposed of by one click of a button or preserved by another.

From the early days of "professional" photography, a similar methodology was used. Bulk film was quite cheap, very cheap compared to the capital cost of equipment, and this permitted the serious pursuit of excellence, to a very large degree, by simple discriminatory selection. The "best" shots were kept, the less than best were discarded. Anyone who buys a digital camera knows how mind-numbingly tedious the selection of a few good pictures can be when your memory card holds several thousand mediocre pictures of sunsets and sea-spray; yet the very small size of some digital cameras allows photography in areas not easily reached by larger cameras: and this opens up a whole new field of endeavour.. macro photography in difficult places.

The natural world presents us with some wonderful imagery at the macroscopic level and digital techniques help to produce pictures that just get better and better. There is a real satisfaction in getting an image to the computer, twiddling around with a good "studio" program, and then producing a quality print or stunning "slide". Suddenly, the new skills become the old skills. Technique becomes important and subject matter, well, matters. The digital camera becomes once again just a tool.

That this is so was recently demonstrated by David Smith. The images displayed at the NEFSG AGM during David's "Forests of Lilliput" slide presentation were stunning examples of the mastery of technique and finely judged subject selection. No one was left in any doubt that photography like this was hugely rewarding...in fact, I could not wait to get out with my new PANASONIC LUMIX and start "macro-ing" away. I was not put off by David's 45 hour vigils, nor was I discouraged by the need to prostrate oneself for long periods on damp wind-swept heaths. Fungi, here I come.

But it is March. There has been a long and deep winter. The fungal community is still not in evidence. I tried a couple of half-hearted attempts at Lichens and Mosses. Not bad. Wall tops, fence post tops, slates at gutter level. All very reasonable and quite interesting but I am not sure what I am taking pictures of. Still, it is good for improving technique though I am not too keen on the prostration bit...there must be a better way to get down to my subject and I need to find it before the fungal year takes off.



Ladies and Gentlemen: I present to you the PADFOS (**P**rostration **A**voidance **D**evice for the **O**ver **S**ixties). 49p at all Boye's Stores. (available in Pink and Blue)

Being of a certain age I occasionally avoid getting right down my subject (in case getting back up is embarrassing) in order to get that stunning close-up. This can mean a surfeit of high angle shots taken with narrow angle/long focal length. Shallow depth of field, long shutter speeds and camera-shake start to become a problem. What I needed was some way of being able to see what I was looking at from ABOVE. After deciding to make a mirror attachment from brass, hinges and of all soldered construction I came across the PADFOS.



It was just luck that this cheap little "purse mirror", sold in Boye's Stores for 49p fitted PERFECTLY across the LCD of my camera.

Simply hacksaw off the back (left) to suit your digital camera and drill a hole to secure the "flap" to the camera tripod mount. The plastic is transparent so marking the location of the hole is easy. The material is a little brittle but quite suitable for the purpose. Just

take the drilling slowly. You can use a tripod screw to fix the device in place (right) or even self-adhesive

backed Velcro (no hole). Once closed the folding mirror-back protects the LCD screen. Opening

out to about 45 degrees (left) allows you to take very low-level pictures by viewing from above (bottom right). You will quickly adapt to the laterally inverted image.

Even normally impossi-

ble shots (e.g. when the subject is round a corner or inside the trunk of a tree (bottom left) become achievable.

In bright sunlight, turn the camera upside down (above) and the mirror back becomes a sun-shade. For high



level shots where you need to stretch up to the subject the angled mirror allows you to see what you are focusing on from below.

Not a bad investment, but do not think you can

rush off to the Patent's Office as this article will beat you to the claim.....and forget contacting Panasonic, they are far too busy making useless AA batteries for sale in their multiple car-boot and Town Market outlets to bother with the idea!

So it's off to Boye's....Hurry now, before stocks are exhausted!

TAK

Forays & Events

May 8th. This year we return to Foxglove Covert at Catterick Camp for our SPRING FORAY. Andy will be leading us and we expect a good turnout as this was a popular and productive venue on our last outing. Make a note of the date NOW.... Be there for a prompt start at 1100 hrs.....you are in the Army now! See right for details.

JUNE 12th. We

are off to Alnmouth in search of our more northerly members! A Jolly is to be loosely arranged beginning (and probably ending!) with lunch at the excellent RED LION INN, 22 Northumberland Street, Alnmouth, **NE66 2RJ**. This is a beautiful location with the opportunity for a gentle stroll/foray afterwards along a wooded coastal walk.

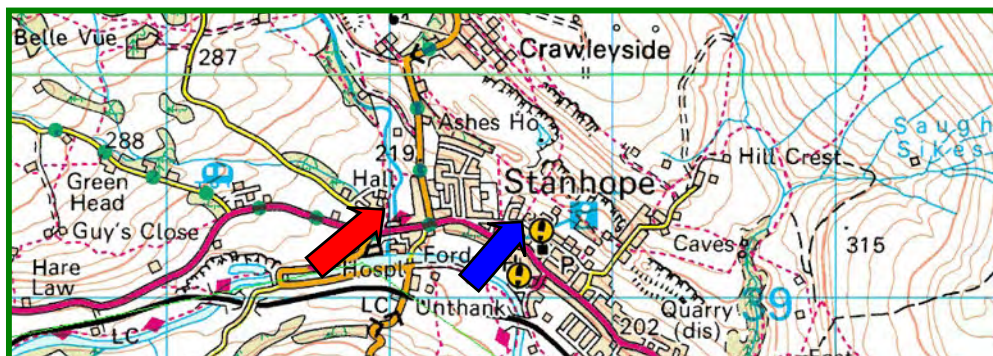
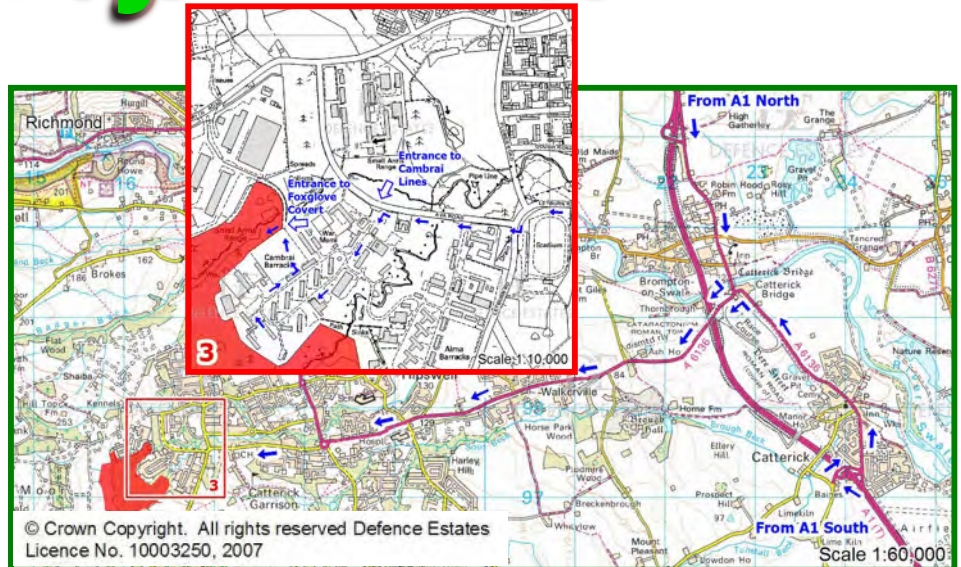
We anticipate sitting down at 12:30. Please note! As always it is IMPORTANT that we get numbers confirmed as soon as possible. This is particularly so if we southerly members intend supporting the Jolly in numbers which would warrant a small coach being made available; departure and return

location not yet finalised but Bishopscroft Crossings would be a provisional jumping off point (TS21 1NJ). PLEASE GET BACK TO ME WITH YOUR INTENT as SOON AS POSSIBLE. There now, you've made me shout! Contact me on **01740 630179** or by e-mail on **tectak@aol.com**.

July 24th. Stanhope Burn is our destination. Andy is working overtime and leading this one,

too. Start time as always 11 a.m. Details below. Meet at the Durham Dales Centre car-park in Stanhope. Grid reference is **NY996393**. There are toilets and cafe etc. The foray itself starts from the public footpath at Stanhope Hall (**NY990393**) but we will

have to make the short walk along the main road first to get there (5 mins).



Notes on the Identification of *Stropharia. Sp.* from Page 5

The three greenish British Species of *Stropharia* often look very distinctive side by side in field guide illustrations (eg. Courtecuisse and Duhem p.356). In the real world, of course, they are never found cheek by jowl like this. *S. caerulea* is described as "common and widespread" in British Fungus Flora Vol.5 (1987). *S. pseudocyanea* is there described as "not uncommon" and *S. aeruginosa* as "common".

The one I see most often is *S. caerulea*, but, even so, not since 2007. I have one record of *S. pseudocyanea* (*albocyanea*), made in 2004, and three of *S. aeruginosa*. In these parts they tend to appear infrequently and only in ones and twos. They are often in poor condition and easy to confuse in the field.

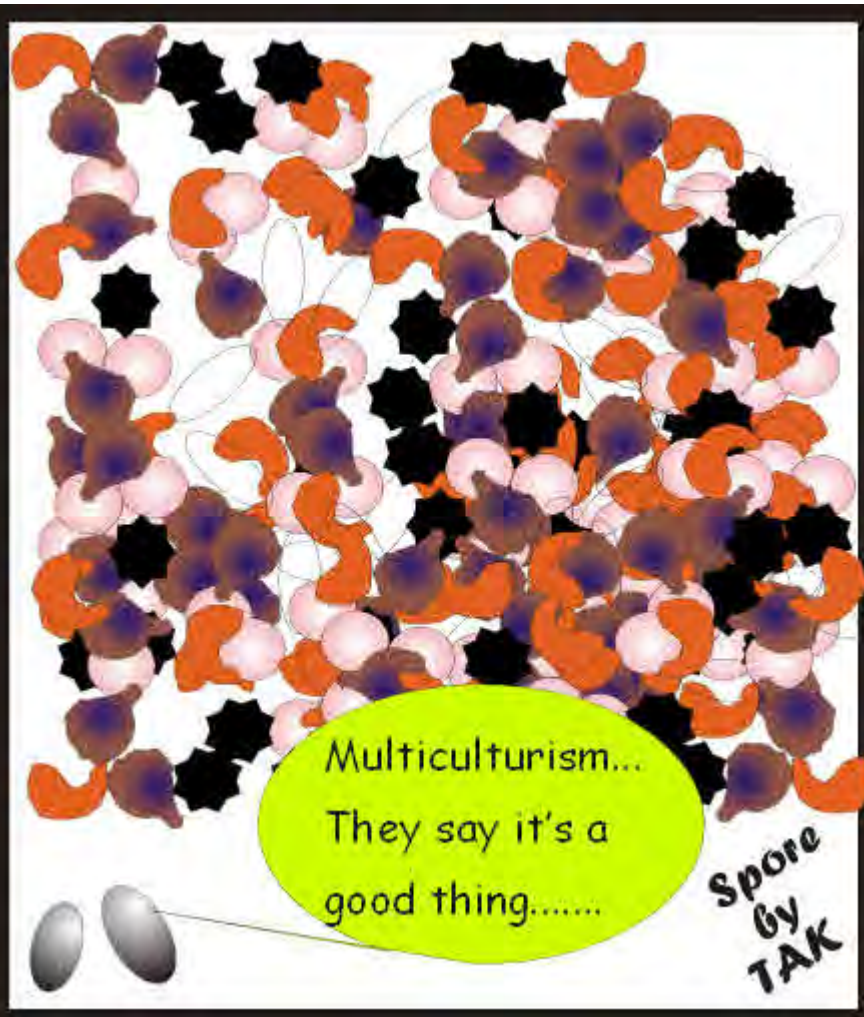
In simple terms, *S. caerulea* is said to have a greenish blue cap with only a few white marginal scales. It has a fleeting ring quickly reduced to a ring-zone. It grows often with nettles and I have found this habitat character very useful. If you are using a microscope, the clinching character is yellowish contents in both marginal and facial cystidia.

S. pseudocyanea tends to be somewhat smaller in size and paler, with a cap becoming unevenly whitish with age. Its stem is usually thinner and its ring fleeting. For some people it has a "strong peppery smell".

S. aeruginosa is quite often found in woods as well as grassland. Its cap tends to be dark blue-green with dense white marginal scales at least when fresh and a relatively large ring usually persisting longer than in the other two species. The gills have a whitish margin when fresh.

Remember that spore size is no guide in distinguishing the three species and all are macroscopically confusable because of intraspecific variations.

AWL



Fungal Foes....The Red Squirrel!

Fungi form an important part of the diet of Red Squirrels and there are a number of reports of this from the UK. However, an article in Finland by Seppo Sulkava and Erik Nyholm tells an amazing story. There, Red Squirrels "pick" a variety of fungi (mainly boletes) and store them in trees where they dry. The dried stores are then eaten through the long winter and form up to 25% of the diet. The squirrels store all sorts of fungi. *Boletus edulis*, *Leccinum versipelle*, *Laccaria laccata*, *Armillaria mellea*, *Mycena galericulata*, *Cortinarius trivialis*, *Russula decolorans*, *Polyporus brumalis*, *Sarcodon imbricatus* and *Rhizopogon luteolus* were all listed. The fungi were taken up into the trees and stored in a fork between the main and side twig or left supported by conifer needles. It is stated that the mushrooms soon soften but then dry and fasten firmly on the twig. Squirrel diet was then sampled through the winter and the dried fungi showed to take up to 25% of their diet.

Source: Sulkava, S & Nyholm, E. (1987). Mushroom stores as winter food of the Red Squirrel, *Sciurus vulgaris*, in northern Finland. *Aquilo. Ser. Zool.* 25:p1-8.

Field Mycology-By Alan Legg

**We seek for knowledge of identities
And gain much satisfaction from success.
There is a kind of power in naming names,
In being aware that we can recognise
What is opaque to many people's eyes.**

**And there is joy in passing knowledge on
Though there's frustration too in failing to,
In being unable to communicate
What took such long years to accumulate.**

**But recognising still the ones we know
Remains a source of regular delight-
And we all love the unexpected too.
Each year's new mysteries reinforce the zest
That marks our special interest as the best!**

Just When You Thought it was all Over...

This issue of the Newsletter is different. You may have spotted the change on the front cover. There, in small print, is a kind of "disclaimer". It is there for a reason which shall be revealed in due course.

Members of the NEFSG are encouraged to air their views and to indicate their requirements at every opportunity....you can contact any member of the Committee by phone, letter or e-mail or express opinions at the AGM or during forays and functions.

Whilst the primary function of the NEFSG has always been to produce accurate records of the fungi found in our "patch", there is intrinsic in this aim a requirement to improve our understanding of Mycology as a group.

To this end, it is important that ALL members get the kind of support and encouragement required for progress. You may well be unsure how to go about this but a good starting point would be to let others know what you feel the NEFSG can do for you.....and of course, *vice versa*!

The easiest way of communicating your thoughts is by the written word. The Newsletter reaches all members and by the inclusion of YOUR articles it is a great way of making yourself heard. Your views are important to the NEFSG...lets hear them.

Now you see why there is a disclaimer on the front cover!

TAK

Season to Taste...

Casserole of Rabbit with St. Georges Mushrooms and Pingo Linguine Pasta

You will need , for two people:

1-Small FARMED rabbit (Not wild rabbit .Too tough for this recipe) Jointed to preference. Reserve bones and carcase.
Handful of PASTA of your choice.
125 ml.Tub of Double cream.
2-chopped shallots.
2- halved garlic cloves.
1-2 pints of UNSALTED chicken stock (not stock cube-too salty).
1-Whole Star anise pod.
3-4 bay leaves dried or fresh.
Handful of chopped fresh herbs but no sage, mint or rosemary.
50 gms of chopped bacon or lardons (cubed).
Good handful of fresh Tarragon (or parsely).
At least 200 grams coarsely chopped St.George's Mushrooms.
Butter 30 gms and olive oil to brown.
1 oz. lightly seasoned plain flour.

Method:

Fry the rabbit carcase and bits in olive oil in a deep pan. Add the shallots. Fry until just browning. Turn down heat. Add the BAY LEAVES. Stir-fry. Add the garlic. Keep moving. Pour in the STOCK and the herbs. Simmer to reduce to ultimately less than half a cup then conserve.

Meanwhile: Cook the pasta. Brown all the rabbit pieces in a little oil and butter. Do not burn the oil/butter mix. Cover the pan and lower the heat to prolong the cooking. Needs at least ten minutes depending upon size of rabbit pieces. Drain and refresh the pasta with a quick dowsing in cold water. Keep warm. When the rabbit is browned, put to one side and allow to cool a little then drain on kitchen towelling and sprinkle with seasoned flour to LIGHTLY coat. Put into pre-heated oven at 150 deg C. for max 15 minutes. Pour the cooking oil/butter into the stock reduction. Now fry off the lardons in the nearly dry pan until just turning. Toss in the St.George's mushrooms and fry in the lardon fat. Add a little olive oil if necessary. Take

off heat after 8-10 minutes when mushrooms have shrunk. Pour oil into stock reduction and gently simmer. Check seasoning then strain off the into a clean pan. Add the cream. Stir. Put the rabbit

back into the frying pan and pour over the stock and cream. Stir to thicken. Cover and very gently simmer for at least 5 minutes. Toss in the chopped tarragon. Check consistency and if too thick add a little cold water. Stir to cook out flour. Bring heat up on mushrooms and lardons just before preparing to serve.

To serve:

Put Pasta on the plate with rabbit on top. Pour over sauce. Scatter mushrooms and lardons over top. Garnish with tarragon sprig. Serve with charred red pepper and broccoli.



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