

A Day Out with Dave Higginson-Tranter and other Fungal Friends

About 15 of us met at the visitor centre car park at 10am. The weather looked hopeful with thin cloud that suggested it would give way to sunshine a little later. The plan was to meander through the beechwoods on the northern side of the park, the alder woodland around Keg Pool and finish in the conifers on the southern side, thus covering a wide variety of habitats and hopefully yielding a good variety of fungal specimens.

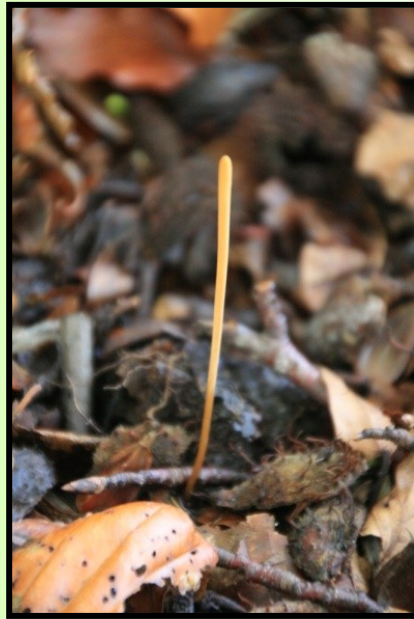


Some giant brackets of *Ganoderma australe* were soon found on an old beech trunk. Followed by the Giant Polypore, *Meripilus giganteus*, at the base of what looked like a healthy big oak tree, but now doomed!

Many specimens of grey coral, *Clavulina cinerea*, were seen in both the deciduous and coniferous areas.



s was the delicate Pipe Club, *Macrotyphula fistulosa*



The cloud did lift as promised, giving a beautiful day with leaves starting to show autumn colours.



The uncommon Blackening Spike and Larch Bolete, graced the manicured lawn which provided a setting for lunch.

Probably the highlight of the day was a beautiful, soft, white bracket almost covering a 2 metre long dead twig (probably alder) , which stumped even Dave for a while. He later identified it as *Plicatoria crispa*, formerly on the Red Data List, but now increasing. We did find it again on a few other twigs.



The conifers did deliver our first Brittlegill – a very poor specimen of *Russula ochroleuca*, and a couple of barely recognisable Boletes. However it was the final section of the walk on the narrow strip running down the lake that started to yield a few larger specimens including Brown Birch Bolete and our only Milkcaps, as well as the remains of our only Fly Agaric.

The finale, down towards the river gave a few Collared Earthstars, if a little past their best.



While the number of specimens seen, particularly the showy ones, was perhaps disappointing, the total number of species recorded was still quite impressive – currently 77 on Dave's list (see <http://www.fungalpunknature.co.uk/CFG/Sightings14.html>). And the very attractive and unusual *Plicatoria crispa* provided much compensation. The day out however was very worthwhile. It is a very pleasant area, even on a busy, sunny Sunday afternoon, with plenty of other items of natural history interest. Birds seen included numerous Mallard, Canada and Greylag Geese and Black-headed Gull as well as Coot, Moorhen, Mandarin Duck, domestic white ducks and geese, Tufted Duck, a few female Goosander and a Robin. Nuthatch and Buzzard were heard in the conifer woodland.



Alder-leaf Beetle was doing its best to consume as many alder leaves as possible, leaving nothing for any fungi that might have had an interest. Flowers were thin on the ground, as expected at this time of year. The occasional Pink Purslane, Devil's-bit Scabious, Bindweed and members of the Geranium family provided some colour, along with Ragwort and the widespread Himalayan Balsam. A few well-shaped Wild Carrot and many bright green Hart's Tongue Ferns still look good at this time. A little Japanese Knotweed was seen, which hopefully can be kept under control. Another (surprisingly) widespread plant was the Great Horsetail. As with the balsam it can look attractive, but is also very difficult to control. Thanks to all for an enjoyable, informative and educational day.