

tentacles are usually a distinctive blue-grey or purple tinged. The body slime is yellow-coloured, not thick and sticky, and may be produced copiously if the slug is handled. As with all limacid species the pneumostome (breathing pore) is located to the rear of the mantle mid-point; on this basis it may be separated from orange/yellow coloured arionid species. Those wishing to assist in this survey are advised against collecting and preserving specimens - the best way of having your identification confirmed is to take a photograph or a digital image.

Basic distributional information is clearly the first step in this project. However, more detailed field data would be of great value, such as: details of the trees present, the ground habitat and flora, fungi species present, the precise habitat in which the

species was found, and any details of the woodland management practice.

An information/recording sheet and details of historical sites or suggestions of potential sites can be provided. The Conchological Society will be setting up a web page which will be regularly updated.

Anyone interested in participating in this project should contact the Project Co-ordinator:

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Reference

Kerney, M. (1999). *Atlas of the Land and Freshwater Molluscs of Britain and Ireland*. Harley, Colchester.

ALL IS NOT LOST

In a dry year on Hampstead Heath

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All those concerned with field mycology must be fearing the worst, following what must go down as one of the poorest years on record for fungi in the UK. Some of you lucky enough to be in some of the damper parts of the country might have fared a little better but surely found that your area was still not up to its usual standards?

I could be seen praying and dancing for rain as the main fungus season approached, while all others danced for joy and basked in the long, hot dry summer, that just didn't seem to want to end. I love a nice summer, don't get me wrong, but I also look forward to autumn and the variety of fungi that usually accompany it. The daunting fact is that the previous season was very similar; could this be a trend in motion?

Yet it wasn't all doom and fungi gloom. Despite the very dry conditions throughout September and October here in Southern England I was out and about leading forays

and visiting areas regularly, especially Hampstead Heath which is near to where I live.

I have written this article essentially to highlight some of the surprising and exciting fungi that appeared during this year that actually might not have done so had the weather conditions been different.

During one of my numerous visits to Hampstead Heath back in early September I was walking one of my usual routes enjoying the sunshine but cursing the lack of fungi, when I passed an old oak tree that had been felled a few decades ago. I have been aware of this decaying bulk ever since I arrived in this area some 20 or so years ago and there were the usual big *Ganoderma australe* brackets on it but little else. On this particular day, as I walked pass the tree, I caught sight of something different out of the corner of my eye which caused me to stop, turn around and take a closer look. There, half buried in the sandy earth that had built up over the

years, were two pristine specimens of *Ganoderma lucidum*. I could hardly believe my eyes. I had found this species only once before in this country at Epping Forest, back in 1998; it was the last thing I expected to see on Hampstead Heath.

After clearing away some of the soil I revealed the long, knobbly, varnished stem, and on wiping away the light soil covering on the cap, the stunning mahogany colour associated with this species shone out. I was quite beside myself, and with my newly acquired Canon digital camera took far too many pictures. As I did so, people passing stopped and asked what this strange looking fungus was. I was more than happy to satisfy their curiosity. This particular specimen is now in Canada along with a prepared culture, where it is possibly going to be used as an epitype for the species, as the type description is backed only by an illustration.

The heat and dry weather was more than likely a big factor in the fruiting of *G. lucidum* and in the plethora of *Laetiporus sulphureus* (Chicken of the woods) and *Fistulina hepatica* (Beefsteak) that could be found throughout the Heath on the big old oak trees.

Another pleasant surprise was discovering *Volvariella bombycina* that had found its way into the damaged bark of a beech tree; a fungus normally associated with elm, but obviously not limited to this host [I have found it on oak on Wimbledon Common - Ed.].

Although it had generally been a bad year for mycorrhizal fungi, a site for *Boletus impolitus* that I had come across some time ago was also producing fruiting bodies during this dry period.

As the season struggled on with little or no rain, I despaired along with many other frustrated amateur mycologists across the country, but just when you give up all hope along comes another surprise. This time it was *Sparassis crispa* (Cauliflower fungus) at the base of one of the few pine trees to inhabit the Heath. I lost count of the number of *Grifola frondosa* specimens that I came across (see photograph below). *Armillaria mellea* (Honey fungus) and *A. gallica* were having a field day and there was also a huge fruiting of *A. tabescens* on an old oak on the Heath extension.

There is a small wooded area in a dip close to the Vale of Health where you have willow, poplar and oak in close proximity and a few of each have died and fallen. Toward the end of October in this tiny area I recorded *Pholiota aurivella*, *Pholiota squarrosa*, *Pholiota gummosa*, *Pleurotus ostreatus* (Oyster Mushroom), *Pleurotus dryinus* and best of all *Hemipholiota populnea*, a new record for me and for Hampstead Heath. And just a little further along from this spot in a small area of dead and dying elm another first for me and the Heath, *Rhodotus palmatus*.

A frustrating season, but not all was lost.



Grifola frondosa, on oold oak, Shropshire. Photograph © Di Hall.