

Millington Woods visit: Wild Things October 2023

Eleven of us took an autumnal stroll through Millington Woods, always lovely despite the devastation caused by Ash Dieback. At least the volume of felled wood hosted a wealth of wood-rotting fungi, often in the weirdest of shapes and colours.

Some of the group walked ahead, while four of us got left behind, scrambling around the wood piles looking through our hand lens at the micro fungi and lichen.

After climbing to the top of the wood and resting for a while on the bench we mycologists, having lost the birdwatchers, returned along the top path, which was rather treacherous. Angela and I walked ahead while Kath and Marilyn took it slowly. Kath took a tumble and rolled slowly and 'daintily' down the hill and was hauled back up by Marilyn. She was remarkably unscathed, thank goodness.

Enjoy the gallery of photos from Simon, Carole, Angela and myself.



Many fallen logs sprouted the eerie Dead Men's and Dead Moll's Fingers (above and over), *Xylaria polymorpha* and *longipes*, the latter smaller and with narrower 'stems' than the former, although it can be difficult sometimes to distinguish the two. As you can see, they carry black spores beneath the outer skin, and the centre flesh is white.



Some of the tinier and most colourful fungi were best viewed through a hand lens, such as the Purple Jellydisc (*Ascocoryne sarcoides*), Lemon Disco (*Bisporella citrina*), Peeling Oysterling (*Crepidotus mollis*) and Witches Butter (*Tremella mesentarica*) above.



We were captivated by the huge numbers of Fairy Inkcaps (*Coprinellus disseminatus*) growing on felled stumps across the woods.



Left: investigating woodpiles for lurking wood-rotters like Turkeytail (*Trametes versicolor*) below



There were many tricky LBJs , mainly 'Bonnets' and 'Brittlestems', Mycenae and Psathyrella fungi which are hard to identify but love damp wood to feast on, like those overleaf.



Much easier to identify on sight were the aptly named Glistening Inkcaps (*Coprinellus micaceus*), and the gorgeous Collared Parachute (*Marasmius rotula*) fungi bottom left, which looks like intricate origami.



There were plenty of giant slugs nibbling at the fungal table but also some lovely snails, such as the *Cochlidina* species on trunks (over), and the White-lipped Snails on stems (below).





We found several larger saprophytic fungi too, all feeding on wood or leaf litter but no mycorrhizal

fungi, those that have symbiotic relationships with trees, like we find in the ancient woodlands like Burton Bushes or North Cliffe Woods.



Above: Dryad's Saddle (*Polyporus squamosus*) and right: Blueing Bracket (*Postia subcaesia*)



Above: Cucumber Cap (*Macrocyttidia cucumis*) and right: Stinking Dapperling (*Lepiota cristata*). I found the Dapperling appropriately stinky ('very fungusy' according to one book), but others in the group thought it smelled of garlic or mint. Just shows how subjective sensory fungi judgements can be.

My most exciting find of the day was a miniscule slime mould on moss, one of the Physarales order, which look blue because they're made up of black spores covered in calcium crystals. Even under my digital microscope these were not identifiable to species, though they may be *Didymium squamulosum* according to the experts on Facebook.



Above: slime mould on moss; right a Cladonia species of lichen with its mature fruiting bodies.



Above: Kath recovers from her fall, not a hair out of place, with rescuer Marilyn, while Angela investigates the den. Below: a late-flowering Nettle-leaved Bellflower (*Campanula trachelium*)





Left and over: cut timber, Ash Dieback, autumn colours in miniature.

Report by HK.

Photos from Angela, Carole, Helen and Simon.



