

## Fungi in North Wiltshire

As in most years, recording of fungi fruiting is a rather patchy affair, largely dependant on weather patterns where fungi are reliant on moisture availability and temperature availability to fruit. 2009 was not an unusually productive year but with some high points, despite the relatively dry patch from February to June and an unusually dry September.

Overall Cotswold Fungus Group contributed almost 2,200 records to W&SBRC from its fungus forays in North Wiltshire from late February through to the end of November. Whilst only a very small proportion of these were significant (new species to the area, red-data listed species of conservation concern, etc), all records have value even if only showing the continued presence of a common fungus species on a site.



Left, the common but beautiful Amethyst Deceiver: *Laccaria laccata*.

Mostly found in broadleaf woodlands and usually under Beech, for example in Savernake Forest.

One relatively uncommon find for the year was the Scarlet Caterpillarclub: *Cordyceps militaris* that grows on the over-wintering pupae of larger moths, usually buried in mossy soil. There are only seven recorded finds for it in North Wiltshire from 1992 – 2008 and on only four sites. It was recorded twice in 2009, at Cadley Church churchyard and a new location for us on Chittoe Heath at Spye Park.



As the Scarlet Caterpillarclub is relatively uncommon in the area, my only good photograph of it (left) comes from a find at a mycological meeting in Normandy, also in autumn 2009.

One of the highlights of the year was the opening of the Mushroom Discovery Room in the renovated farm buildings at Stanton Country Park, just to the north of Swindon. The posters, displays and giant fungi models explain the role of fungi in our everyday life as well as their importance to the park itself. Stanton Country Park is managed by the Swindon Ranger Service on behalf of Swindon Council. If you are in the area, please do visit the exhibition, its fun and education for all the family. For more information, check out their website at: <http://www.swindon.gov.uk/leisuresport/parksandgardens/leisure-stantonpark.htm>

Over the last thirteen years of fungus foraging we have recorded 907 species of fungi there, the second highest recorded site fungus flora in North Wiltshire, with 63 species new to the site in 2009. One of the two Red Data species of fungi present at Stanton Country Park is The Flea's Ear: *Chlorencoelia versiformis* (*Chlorociboria versiformis* as was) below left. Closely related to the Green Elfcup *Chlorociboria aeruginascens*, below right, it is not anywhere near as common, not as colourful and doesn't stain the wood green as it grows on it and decomposes it. However, it is still a remarkable find and there are only six records of it in North Wiltshire, five at Stanton Country Park And one at Clouts Wood, a W.W.T reserve near Wroughton.



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