

Hygrocybe viola and other woodland waxcaps



The grasslands at Wyndrush Pastures SSSI usually hold a good variety of waxcaps, but this year the heat of the summer had baked the meadows dry and our characteristic species (including the recently described *Gliophorus reginae*) appeared in small numbers or didn't appear at all. The woodland banks and streamsides, in contrast, displayed a good variety of waxcaps, as well as other traditional grassland species such as earthtongues (*Geoglossum* species). These ancient banks were presumably created hundreds of years ago from the soil and rocks of the fields, at a time when these would have held a full complement of mycological riches. *Hygrocybe irrigata* and *H. chlorophana* could be found under the rootplate of an old willow, *H. virginea* on the trunk of an old ash and *H. mucronella* amongst moss on an old boundary bank. The *Hygrocybe psitticana* on the banks here is of a particularly striking grey-blue-green shade. *Hygrocybe calyptiformis* grows out of a bank under hazel and holly.

Pick of the crop, however, was the amethyst waxcap, *H. viola* (or *Chromosera viola* as it is now) which first appeared on the riverbank just upstream from the farm boundary. The three tiny fruitbodies were on bare moist clay near the top of the bank, under a lip of eroding soil held by hazel roots. A sparse growth of the liverworts *Pellia epiphylla* and *Lophocolea bidentata* grows on the clay here. Other interesting fungi are nearby, including *Gibellula pulchra*, the fungal parasite of spiders that is rarely recorded but rather frequent here and a small *Russula* which Geoffrey Kibby suggests may be an undescribed species. I found three more fruitbodies on my own land the following month, on another damp clay bank with a similar growth of liverworts and several pocket moss *Fissidens* species. A third location, about twenty metres downstream from here, produced three more in mid-December then a fourth site, on the farm boundary produced yet another troop of three after Christmas (opposite the only group I've found of that other distinctive violet fungus, the violet coral *Clavaria zollingeri*).

There were only six British records, and these are the first Welsh records of this red-listed species. I would imagine it to be sparsely distributed elsewhere in south Pembrokeshire where relatively small, unpolluted streams go through broad-leaved woodland on clay soil. Searches need to be made slowly from within a stream channel. All my specimens were well above the maximum height of flow, on steep well consolidated 'grey' clay banks. Liverworts rather than mosses were dominant.



The cap is only about 5mm across, but the colour does stand out



Three fruitbodies were found on the bank here



The amethyst waxcap, with *Pellia* and *Fissidens* liverworts



The unknown *Russula*, colour changing to pink then violet, previously found opposite the *Hygrocybe viola*.

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