

MUSHROOM NEWSLETTER

2 July 2010



What does glorious hot dry weather mean for mushrooms?

Will we ever return to 'normal' weather? Although the most obvious climate feature this year was the extremely cold winter, so far it has also been abnormally dry, with barely half the usual rainfall. This has hit pastoral species badly because they rely on damp surface soil for heavy fruiting. Thus I have been disconsolately checking my fairy ring patches for several weeks now, but to no avail. Fortunately one of the benefits of this newsletter is the feedback it provokes. Two regular readers have contacted me with news of their latest finds.

Bas wrote from the (very damp) Pyrenean foothills to report:

They are finding fairy ring now . . . we found a little basketful of *Boletus aestivalis* (summer cèpe). . . [these are] less dense in texture and less intense (more summery) in flavour [than *Boletus edulis*] . . . They also say the girolles won't be far behind and the trompettes des morts will start soon in the mountains...

Likewise an Essex-based reader, Michael Webber, got in contact to say that not only is he finding fairy rings and horse mushrooms, but that he's set up a blog (see <http://essexmushrooms.blogspot.com/>).

Inspired by this news and an overnight downpour, I trotted up the hill this morning to find that, at long last, my own patch was fruiting.



Bas's French fairy rings – and their Welsh equivalents

And on the subject of fairy rings, one interesting fact I picked up on my Turkish morel jaunt was that apparently you can spot some of these rings on Google's satellite maps. I've zoomed in on the cricket pitch at Blenheim Palace (just south of the house) and can't make up my mind whether it's true or not.



Can you see fairy rings from space?

So what does this mean for the autumn? Well, of course it's far too early to say, but even if the dry weather continues, its impact on woodland species is far less clear. These have mycorrhizal symbiotic relations with trees. Now before you get completely turned off by this scientific language, all it generally means is that the fungi are tapping into the tree's sap, often contributing nutrients such as nitrogen and

phosphates in return for water and sugars. This means woodland fungi are far less susceptible to drought than pastoral species. Instead it seems the growing season for the tree is far more important. As I've mentioned before, apparently the best season for porcini in Mid Wales was the year of the great drought – 1976. This was, of course, also great for timber production, no doubt thanks to weeks upon weeks of cloudless skies.



Reservoir levels are dropping – will a drought produce a bumper crop?

Obviously there's plenty of time left for the heavens to open – or for the clouds to vanish, so there's no point speculating too much. In the meanwhile, however, let's hope for a little more rain in the middle of the month to kick the chanterelles into action (they usually come up in the third week of July).

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P.S. As always, just a quick reminder that because I loathe junk e-mails, I'd hate to think I was cluttering up your inbox. If at any time you want your name taken off, just let me know with a brief - preferably polite - indication that you want to be removed.