

An unusual colour form of Scarlet Elfcap *Sarcoscypha austriaca* var. *austriaca* (O. Beck ex Sacc.) Boud.

John Bingham



01. Scarlet Elfcap *Sarcoscypha austriaca* with *S. austriaca* var. *austriaca*, at Duncleat near Kidderminster 24.02.2024. John Bingham.

Fungi are poorly represented generally in wildlife reporting and Worcestershire Recorders (WR) are fairly typical, with few reports appearing in Worcestershire Record. As Graham Martin pointed out in issue 52 of Worcestershire Record (Martin 2024), we now have a new name 'Funga' to set the fungal kingdom on a par with Flora and Fauna. Perhaps this may encourage WR members to consider writing the occasional note or article on this under-appreciated kingdom - I can but hope!

To provide some interest, I can report an interesting 'form' of the normally red Scarlet Elfcap [aka Elfcup] *Sarcoscypha austriaca* var. *austriaca*, found by Denise Bingham at Duncleat near Kidderminster in a wet Alder carr woodland on 24th February 2024 (01 & 02). Scarlet Elfcap is common in Worcestershire often on fallen *Fraxinus*, *Salix*, *Acer* or *Corylus* twigs in damp or wet woodland. This orange colour is caused by a lack of pigments. There is a very rare (just one British record?) yellow variant *Sarcoscypha austriaca* var. *lutea* and telling the two apart is very difficult but due to the extreme rarity of the latter I have assumed the Duncleat elfcaps to be the commoner form *austriaca*.



02. Scarlet Elfcap *Sarcoscypha austriaca* var. *austriaca*, Duncleat 24.02.2024. John Bingham.

Just to add further confusion there is Ruby Elfcap *Sarcoscypha coccinea*, formerly considered to be the most frequent species, but now known to be uncommon and it occurs typically on *Fagus*, *Ulmus* and *Corylus* on drier sites, and is smaller in size (<5cm) and darker red in colour. A microscope is required to be certain, by checking the hairs on the outer surface of the cup: look for uncoiled hairs in *S. coccinea* and coiled hairs in *S. austriaca*.

Despite the problems in identification of many fungi, I hope a few WR members will take up the Funga challenge and add to our knowledge of this kingdom in the county.

Reference

Martin, G. 2024. Funga. *Worcestershire Record* 52:66.

Images

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