

PRESS RELEASE

NORFOLK & NORWICH NATURALISTS' SOCIETY



12th November 2020

Available for immediate release

Norfolk & Norwich Naturalist's Society

Devil's Fingers in Norfolk

Outline

When 10-year old Harvey Hill found strange fungal growths amongst the raspberry canes on his mother's allotment at West Runton this summer, he took a photograph. His research online revealed that it was Devil's Fingers, a non-native species possibly originating in Australasia. County Fungus Recorder, Tony Leech of the Norfolk and Norwich Naturalists' Society, confirmed that this was the first time that the fungus had been recorded in Norfolk.

Additional information

Devil's Fingers *Clathrus archeri* is a highly distinctive fungus which shares with the common Stinkhorn a spore dispersal mechanism which relies on flies. Unlike most fungi, which release their spores into the air for dispersal by wind, these produce them in a foul-smelling slime which attracts carrion flies that carry the spores to new sites. The red colour of Devil's Fingers is thought to mimic flesh and act additionally as a visual attractant for the flies.

Most fungi of this kind are tropical or occur in the Southern Hemisphere, and Devil's Fingers is found widely in Australasia. It is thought - perhaps assumed - that humans have been responsible in some way for its spread around the world. No one has a convincing theory about how the species got here from Australasia but it is not the only fungus to have apparently done so.

The first European record is from the Vosges region (in the 1920s), and the first British record was from Penzance in 1945. It was recorded from Sussex in 1953 and West Kent in 1976. Subsequently has been seen in a number of locations around these 'centres' and increasingly more widely. Most records are from counties on the south coast but it has been found in scattered locations over

southern England and increasingly further north, including Suffolk (Wenhaston) in 2007 and very recently at two places in Northern Ireland. It is difficult to escape the view that increases in temperature have played a part in the spread.

See photo taken by Harvey Hill

Further information from the County Fungi Recorder Tony Leech – 01263 712282

Carl Chapman, Chairman NNNS, says: The discovery of Devil's Fingers is a dramatic one, yet new Fungi for Norfolk are being found constantly; yet again an indication of the knowledge and dedication of NNNS members.

Society Chairman Carl Chapman carl@wildlifetoursandeducation.co.uk Mobile 07833 463 034

Website www.nnns.org.uk

The NNNS is a registered charity (Reg No. 291604) founded in 1869 and is the county's senior Natural History Society established for the study and conservation of Norfolk's wildlife. It publishes papers on natural history especially those pertaining to the county of Norfolk. It currently has in excess of 600 members, arranges lectures and meetings and the promotion of field work. Specialist groups cover most aspects of the county's flora and fauna.

-----ends-----
=====