

NEWSLETTER 1 – August 2006 follow up

“Editorial note”

Hi all

Time to follow up on the first newsletter. Included are some more pictures of the bushveld bolete, and the identity of UFO1 in the separate newsletter. I had to split them because the file became too big for some people's modems. Please, always remember to ask me if there is anything you would like to know more of, or do not understand. For those of you who feel a bit lost, as there come more newsletters with more information, some things will become clearer. For instance, in the next newsletter I will treat the different groups of fungi you will see. This includes fungi with pores (little holes across the surface) such as the ones treated here.

Happy hunting!
Marieka

Fungus recipe of the month

Ehhh...I am still waiting...

Fungus of the month – more photos

I was sent some more photo's of the bushveld bolete by Bernice (top 3), Nicole ("baby" bushveld bolete) and Jolanda (bottom 3). Aren't they magnificent?



Nicole says they tried some of the bolete, but they did not go on a hallucogenic trip and may had to ingest more...Nicole better keep us updated then! The picture of the boletes in a clump (not single) was taken in the student parking lot just outside our campus, while the location of the others look like bushveld or grass. The one that almost looks slimy is because it rained.

As you can see there is some variation. For instance, the one photo shows them in a clump, while others have caps that are lighter. Jolanda and I thus wonder if there are not several things in South Africa that represent new species...

UFO's - solutions

UFO 1 – bracket on *Eucalyptus* tree by Izette:

Thanks to the input from Francois and Nicole, we now know that UFO1 is *Laetiporus sulphureus*. There is a feature on it on Tom Volk's site (July 2001). Nicole also sent us the photo below.



This photo I borrowed from Tom Volk's site to show you the variation one gets:



Below follows some background info I read on Tom Volk's site, and from VdWesth&Eicker and Mushrooms Demystified (more on books in next Newsletter). One day we will have a written piece on what is important to know when you identify a bracket fungus like this if you worry that things are a bit unclear now.

***Laetiporus sulphureus* – the sulphur shelf or chicken of the woods (swawel rakswam)**

Etymology: laet-, gay, abundant, bright, pleasing; porus refers to the pores it has at the bottom, sulphureus probably refers to its sulphur colour.

It is parasitic, thus living on live trees, and causes a brown cubic rot in the heart wood (brown rot: once the log has been decayed only brown fibers remain, we will treat rots one day). The heart wood is in the center of the trunk so the tree trunk becomes hollow, but the tree is still alive because the heart wood is dead anyway. *L. sulphureus* can also kill the tree. It seems to like *Eucalyptus*, oaks and conifers. It can also live off roots so do not be surprised if you find it on the ground and not on a tree. It can also survive saprophytically (meaning it can live off dead material as opposed to live tissue). The fruiting bodies are full of water and can thus weigh quite a lot. It is amazing as these structures can apparently appear before the rainy season.

It is not called chicken of the woods for nothing, it literally tastes like chicken and also has a similar texture. In fact, Tom Volk recommends it as a vegetarian substitute for chicken. It looks like one must take care while preparing it, though, (thus read some more please) and you must make sure that it is cooked thoroughly. Sometimes only bits (e.g. the young parts near the edge) are really worth the trouble, and it may cause some unpleasant digestive upsets if eaten raw or if it grew on certain tree species, e.g. *Eucalyptus*. The taste may also differ between young structures and older ones (it becomes more sour). But despite all this, it is recommended as one of the best things to eat.

Distinguishing features: large, conspicuous, fleshy fruitbodies, often brightly yellow or orange, surface also look velvety, pores underneath, occur as shelves on the tree trunk (Nicole and Izette's photo) or/and as rosettes (Tom's photo).

You could already see from the pictures that there is a lot of variation in how it looks like. This may just be variation, but recent research (looking at the DNA of the fungi) suggests that these differences may actually represent different species. E.g. fruit bodies that occur on different parts of the trunk, that have a different pore colour, grow either in rosettes or in shelves, occur in certain areas or host trees, may actually represent different species. These species also differ in their edibility. Because the one in Izette's picture is so pale, it could actually be a different species. But for now, we will call all of them *sulphureus*.

There is another fungus in VdWesth&Eicker that looks similar to *L. sulphureus* and has a similar habit (way it occurs on its substrate). It is called ***Pseudophaeolus baudonii*** or orange-yellow rough top (of bloekomvoetswam). It is a more uniformly yellow colour, and apparently stains brown when bruised or when the flesh dries. Otherwise I am not sure how to tell them apart without the use of a microscope. Does anyone have photographs?

Etymology: pseudo- means false or similar to, and *Phaeolus* is another fungus (dye polypore). I have a nice photograph of a dye polypore and you will get it one day. I think baudon is either a person or a place.

This fungus looks like a native of Africa as it has been reported in several other African countries (*L. sulphureus* is common in North America and Europe). It is a pathogen of broad-leaved trees, e.g. it caused serious damage to *Eucalyptus* plantations once, sometimes pines as well. This fungus can also grow on clumps of grass. I am not sure if it is associated with rots, I presume it causes a brown rot. Apparently bushmen, small mammals and tortoises like to eat it, but its edibility for humans is unknown.

Index fungorum says that currently this fungus has been transferred to *Laetiporus* and is now known as ***Laetiporus baudonii***. This makes sense because they look so similar. We thus have two *Laetiporus* species to look out for. So next time when you see a fungus like this, double-check that it has pores below, look at the colour and texture, and scratch it to see if there is a brown discolouration.

UFO 2 – mushrooms by Nicole: still a mystery. I guess you have to collect some samples for us!