

Polyporus squamosus – Dryad’s saddle or saddle back fungus

Occurrence

Polyporus squamosus (*Polyporus* meaning ‘many pores’) is widely distributed, being common in Britain attacking various species of broadleaved trees including *Ulmus*, *Acer* esp. *sycamore*, *Fagus*, *Fraxinus*, *Tilia* and *Aesculus*. The fruit bodies usually occur at the site of a wound on branches and trunks, sometimes high up on trunks and very rarely on conifers.



Polyporus squamosus on *Fagus sylvatica* at approximately 15m in height

A dryad in Greek mythology is a tree dwelling nymph, also known as a tree sprite. *Polyporus squamosus* was said to look like a saddle that tree nymphs would sit on.

Fruiting Body

A basidiomycetes with fan shaped fruiting bodies that grow very rapidly solitary or in groups, often taking just 14 days to reach a diameter of 25cms and can grow up to 60cms in diameter. Usually there is a short lateral stalk which is often dark coloured at the base. They are annual appearing in late summer, soon decaying, and become infested with maggots. However, in

my experience they are appearing earlier in the summer than perhaps is recognised by the text books.

The upper surface, which is pale fawn, has numerous dark brown, appressed scales which are characteristic of the species. (*squamosus* meaning scale-like) The pore surface is a pale cream colour darkening with age, pores are irregular, angular and large.



Photograph by Mick Boddy

Colonisation Strategy

Infection takes place at a wound on a branch or trunk entering the sapwood. (sapwood exposed) From wounds on the trunk the fungus can travel up and down the heartwood and eventually this results in hollowing of the trunk. It causes a spongy or stringy white rot in which there can be considerable mycelium present. In branches where the branch collar is in

place, the fungus may be limited to a cone of decay as might be contained by the actions of the tree walling the fungus off. (Compartmentalisation)

Arboricultural Significance

Polyporus squamosus was a principal cause of heartwood decay in elms in GB. Today affected stems may fail; I have seen evidence of this in two trees recently in horse chestnut and sycamore. In branches the decay may be restricted therefore not posing a significant risk.

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References

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