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First record of the salmon salad fungus *Guepinia helvelloides* in the Glasgow area, Scotland

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The parks of Glasgow have long been known for hosting a variety of interesting fungi (Marshall, 1979). Since 2010 the Clyde and Argyll Fungus Group (CAFG) has undertaken numerous fungal surveys in parks and country parks around the Glasgow area, adding many new fungi records which have been submitted to the Fungal Records Database of Britain and Ireland (FRDBI). Some of the more unusual finds by CAFG members within the environs of Glasgow have been highlighted in a series of notes in *The Glasgow Naturalist* (O'Reilly, 2018-2020, 2022; O'Reilly & Mitchell, 2019; O'Reilly & Taylor, 2023).

On 11th November 2022, an unusual looking fungus comprising a clump, about 10 cm in diameter, of concentric fleshy apricot-coloured lobes was found by RM in the Dams to Darnley Country Park, on the southern outskirts of Glasgow. The fungus was found growing amongst leaf litter and exposed tree roots under a large goat willow (*Salix caprea*). This was located in a wooded area east of the Brock Burn (NS5267458842) and just a short walk north-west of the park entrance at Corselet Road/Brock Burn culvert. A photograph was sent to CAFG member Gill Smart who determined it as a salmon salad fungus (*Guepinia helvelloides*) based on its distinctive shape and colouration (Fig. 1).

The site was visited by CAFG member MOR almost a month later on 10th December and the fungus clump was still present and relatively intact, albeit partly frozen by an intervening cold snap. The characteristic form and apricot hue of the fruiting body was still evident allowing confirmation of the identification. Around a year later on 3rd October 2023, RM revisited the site and discovered that the salmon salad fungus had reappeared at the exact same spot.

The salmon salad fungus is a relatively infrequent species in the British Isles. There are just over 200



Fig. 1. Salmon salad fungus (*Guepinia helvelloides*) from Dams to Darnley Country Park, Glasgow, November 2022. The £2 coin is 12.8 mm in diameter. (Photo: R. Mason)

records with most scattered across England and Wales, only three records from Ireland, and a dozen from Scotland. The previous finds nearest to the Glasgow area are to the north, from Perthshire in Doune, 2008, and Strathyre Forest, 2013; a single record from Larkhall, Lanarkshire, in 2019; and, further south, two finds on CAFG forays in Ayrshire at Shewalton Moss in 2020 and Galston in 2022 (FRDBI, 2023). There is also a find from Loch Fad on the Isle of Bute, Firth of Clyde in 2012.

Salmon salad fungus is a distinctive species with its brightly coloured fruit bodies and rubbery texture. It usually has a salmon pink colouration, hence its common name, but may also be apricot-coloured, as in this new find, providing the alternative common name of apricot jelly. However, despite its name, the species, although edible, even when raw, is rather bland and of little culinary interest. Although easily identifiable it could be confused with the hare's ear fungus (*Otidea onotica*). The scarcity of salmon salad fungus means that it is only figured in the more comprehensive field guides (e.g. Buczacki *et al.*, 2012) and hence may go unrecognised by many casual foragers. However, many foragers now browse the internet to help identify fungi and this species is well described and illustrated on the First Nature website (First Nature, 2023) where it can be easily distinguished from the hare's ear fungus. This new find in a suburban setting suggests that salmon salad fungus might be more widespread in Scotland than

previously realised and salmon salad, or apricot jelly, should now be considered “on the menu” of Scottish fungi.

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