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Fungus of the Month - April 2010



Dermocybe erythrocephala

Dermocybe erythrocephala is a distinctive bright red-brown to red-orange mushroom that grows amongst litter in the wetter areas of eucalypt forests and woodlands in southern Australia. When fully developed, caps are usually 2.5-3.5 cm in diameter and they stand 10-15 cm tall. The gills are bright orange-red in colour and have a dry appearance compared to the moist surface of the cap. Stems are yellowish-red and generally slender. Although they are brightly coloured they are surprisingly well camouflaged, especially when the surrounding leaf litter is wet. *D. erythrocephala* is easily confused with a similar species *D. kula* (inset), and a correct identification generally requires detailed examination of microscopic characters. Sometimes both species are found growing in close proximity.

Dermocybe mushrooms are generally brightly coloured and contain extractable pigments that can be used to dye fabrics. *D. erythrocephala* and *D. kula* can produce a deep pinkish-purple dye but colour depends on the extraction process used.

The Latin/Greek scientific name refers texture of the cap surface and the colour; *derm*-: skin, *cybe*-: head, *erythr*-: red or reddish, *cephal*-: head and *kula* is an aboriginal word meaning blood.