Fungus of the Month – February 2007

Hypoxylon subrutilans

Hypoxylon subrutilans forms flat purplish-red sheets called *stroma* on the bark of dead stems and twigs of understorey shrubs and small trees. It is common in forested areas of the southwest and can be found in late summer and early autumn. Under the coloured powdery surface, the structure of the stroma is hard and carbon-like. Within the stroma context, spores are formed in small vessel-shaped structures called *perithecia* and are released through tiny pore-like openings called *ostioles* that can be seen on the surface. Species of *Hypoxylon* are thought to be semi-parasitic in living trees, but only actively decay wood once the host tree is dead. There are a number of similar species; *Hypoxylon subcorticium* (*Inset, left*) forms similar stroma but on bare wood surfaces and *Hypoxylon diatryeoides* (*Inset, right*) forms small globular colonies, also on the bark surface of dead stems and twigs.

The Latin name – what it means: *Hypo-* below or under, *Xylon-* wood or woody, *sub–* almost or somewhat, *rutilans–* reddish-orange.

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