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## Fungus of the Month - August 2009



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### *Nidula emodensis* - gel birds nest

*Nidula emodensis* belongs to a group of fungi commonly called birds nest fungi. The fruit bodies are small, deeply cup-shaped structures up to about 5 mm across. The outer surface of the flared cups are light brown and hairy. Young specimens have a lid-like covering that ruptures or falls off when mature. Spores are enclosed in small egg-like capsules called peridioles which are embedded in a thick mucilage or gel. Spores are released when raindrops fall into the cups and splash out the eggs.

There are a number of birds nest fungi, which are distinguished by the colour and size of their eggs and whether or not the eggs have a small thread-like attachment. Species of *Nidula* have small brown eggs with no thread and are embedded in gel. Most species of birds nest fungi fruit in the late autumn, generally on small well-rotted twigs or organic matter, but some are also found on recently burnt ground.

The Latin name refers to the nest-like appearance of the fruit body and the place of origin of the scientific collection originally described. *Nidul*:- little nest, *Emodus*: The Himalaya (Greek), *-ensis*: place of growth or origin.