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Fungus of the Month - December 2012



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Melanotus hepatochrous

Melanotus hepatochrous is a small hoof-shaped fungus that fruits on the bark of dead wood in late autumn and early winter in eucalypt forests in southern Australia. In the southwest of Western Australia it is most often found on fallen branch wood of marri (*Corymbia calophylla*).

Melanotus hepatochrous generally fruits in large numbers. Caps are up to 10 mm broad, hoof- or half dome-shaped, brown to dark red brown, often with a shiny appearance—resembling the polished toe of leather boots (*see inset*). The margin is lighter yellow brown, often with fine scales giving it a woolly appearance. From the underside, caps are fan-shaped, with symmetrically arranged gills radiating from the point of attachment of the stem. The gills are in sets with 2-3 different lengths, brown in colour with a dull yellow brown edge. Stems are laterally attached, short or sometimes rudimentary, red brown in colour with a dense covering of fine white fibrils or scales near the apex which then become sparse down the length and sometimes dense again at the base.

The scientific name refers to the red-brown to liver colour of the fruit body. *Melan-*: black, *-otus*: resembling, possessing or furnished with, *hepat-*: liver, *chro-*: colour or superficial appearance, skin.