

BOGDIVERSITY THURSDAY



—*from Head Naturalist Clinton*

Trainwrecker Mushroom

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During the Fungi Foray and Workshop last Saturday, September 9, we learned a lot and found a basketful of really interesting fungi. One of those species was not only a new addition to the species list for our area, but a beautiful mushroom and one with an interesting story! Today, let's take a close look at the Trainwrecker!

Trainwrecker, *Neolentinus lepideus*, is a fairly inconspicuous white mushroom. Fairly large, this species is a decomposer of primarily conifers, especially Red Pine in our area. Trainwrecker is a fairly widespread species, being found primarily in eastern North America, Europe, into Mexico and the western United States, as well as Russia. It is not a particularly edible species, as it can often be found growing on treated pine lumber. Oddly, this species can also be found in lowlight conditions in mines, due to its love of conifer wood which is used as beams for tunnel supports in old mines!

As you may have guessed, the common name of this species is quite purposeful. But how does a mushroom go about wrecking a train? Does it gum up the wheels? Does it make tracks slippery? This species got its name due to its biology (decomposer of conifer wood) and the economic use of conifers as railroad ties! If the mycelium of this fungus was found in the wood used to support railroads, the fungus would eventually decompose the wood. That wood would crumble and if enough pieces crumbled and decomposed, the railroad bed would become unstable and trains could derail and wreck!

The fruiting season of this species begins in the spring and continues into the fall, so if you are out looking for mushrooms, pay attention to areas with dead and dying pines to find this beautiful mushroom! Though it seems quite plain, this species is quite scaly along the stipe, as well as its cap. The gills of Trainwrecker are interesting, being highly serrated, something not commonly seen in gilled fungi in our area. The specimen below was found along the McDavitt Township Recreation Area trails, along with a number of other interesting fungi!

More information about this species and one of its host trees included in the photos below!

(Photos by Head Naturalist Clinton)



As it ages, the cap of Trainwrecker becomes saddle shaped, but the center of the cap remains brownish and scaly.



The gills of Trainwrecker are uniquely serrated! The gills of this species change color as it gets older and begins producing spores.



Red Pine is a magnificent conifer and important part of the northern forests in Minnesota. It supports a wide range of species, including Trainwrecker mushroom!