

UC SANTA CRUZ CAMPUS NATURAL RESERVE

PINK WAXCAP



Tiernan Boyd

Scientific Name: *Porpolomopsis calyptriformis*

Common Name: Pink Waxcap

Global Rarity: Vulnerable (IUCN)

U.S. or State listing: Unranked

UCSC Rarity: Very rare

UCSC Distribution

The pink wax cap is a rare sight even at UCSC, but it has been found in redwood forest on campus. The species may also occur California bay and oak trees as well.

General Description

The pink waxcap, or the “ballerina”, is a gilled mushroom with a light pink or salmon-colored pointed cap and white stem. When they’re young, the mushrooms have rosy gills that become paler with maturation, at which point the cap typically splits. The pink waxcap creates a white spore print. These mushrooms are most common in the grasslands of the United Kingdom, but can also be found in coastal forests of the northwestern United States where it is hypothesized that pink waxcaps grow near mosses.

Life history

Habitat: UK’s natural and semi-natural grasslands and meadows, and coastal forests of the Northwest US.

Spores: White, smooth, and ellipsoid

Growth: Often fruiting late in the winter season, the pink wax cap grows in association with mosses and can grow up to 12-13 cm tall. Although the gills start out light rose-pink, they become more pale with maturity and the mushroom cap also splits at this time.

Identification

Cap: Pale pink to salmon colored, acutely conical. 2.5-6 cm diameter. Splits when mature

Gills: Pale pink to light nude color. Create a white spore print

Stem: White, up to 7cm tall

Geographic Range

In the United Kingdom the range for the pink wax cap is western England and Wales. In the United States they can be found in northwestern coastal forests.





Conservation Status

Vulnerable

The International Union for Conservation of Nature has listed Pink Waxcaps as Vulnerable to extinction. **Please do not pick them if spotted!**

Threats

Internationally

1. Habitat destruction and loss resulting from development and other factors
2. Addition of fertilizers for intensified stock production
3. Cessation of traditional management techniques such as grazing or mowing, allowing grassland to convert to scrub/forest (UK)

UCSC campus

1. Habitat reduction
2. Potential future development plans

Research Highlights and Fun Facts

- Pink wax caps are also referred to as “ballerinas” because the pink cap looks like a ballerina’s tutu.
- Sheep grazed, acidic fields are the most likely spots to find these mushrooms in the UK.
- These mushrooms are edible but should not be harvested as they are extremely rare!



References and Photo Credits

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