



Wandering the Woods with Matt

A bright orange fungus (*Byssonectria terrestris*)

Observed March 17, 2021

Last week while visiting the Learn Preserve in Tannersville, I came across what looked like a clutch of small orange balls spilled across some leaf litter.

It turns out that they were a type of fungus (*Byssonectria terrestris*) that is widespread across the Northern Hemisphere and associated with deer urine.

About 17 species of *Byssonectria* are currently known, distributed in the Northern Hemisphere in both New and Old Worlds. The species of the genus utilize nutrient-rich substrates, ranging from burned areas, rodent and porcupine dung, and leaf litter where deer and elk have urinated.

Byssonectria terrestris, which like many fungi does not have a common name, is the most commonly encountered species of the genus, at least in North America. It is found most often in early Spring, about the time of snow melt. As its specific epithet "*terrestris*" suggests, the substrate is earth or leaf litter. One of the ways to identify this species is to look for the thin but prominent white subiculum (the cobby white substance surrounding the "orange balls" that drew my eye).

It was a brilliant bit of color in an otherwise drab time of year and a reminder that every day is a good day to venture outdoors and see what nature has in store for you!

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Observe here the small size of the fungus, and the thin but prominent white cobby substance (subiculum) found in the surrounding leaf litter.



Close-up photo of Byssonectria terrestris