



Fungi

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The United Nations declared 2010 to be the International Year of Biodiversity. It is a celebration of life on earth and of the value of biodiversity for our lives. Our Society celebrates and acknowledges Australia's biodiversity.

Australia is world-renowned for its often extraordinary and unique natural environment – including many of its plants and animals.

A remarkable aspect of our natural world – fungi – is often overlooked. Many are brightly coloured, some fluorescent; some are elegant, others squat; some are fragrant, more still are highly toxic.

Chlovibrissea-bicolor



Hericium-coralloides

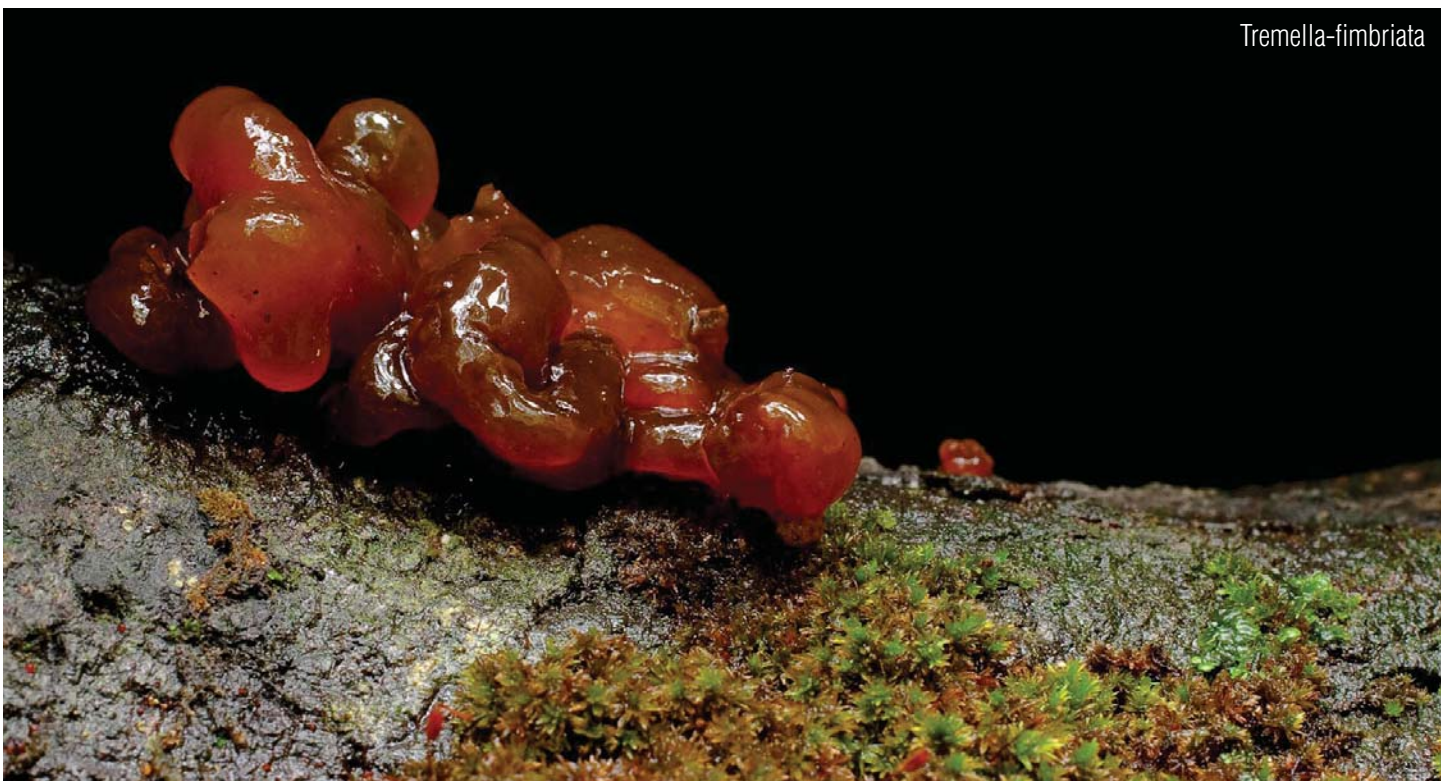
Fungi are an important group of organisms, essential to nutrient cycling and recycling, and to the health of most plants and animals. Of the estimated 250,000 species of fungi in Australia only about five percent have been described.

The fungal kingdom is thought to contain the most number of species after insects and is probably the least understood of all the organisms on the planet. Most of us are aware of the mushrooms and toadstools that we see popping up in the garden but very few are aware of the huge array of microscopic fungi that exist.

Fungi are neither plants nor animals. Lacking chlorophyll (like animals), they rely on pre-existing organic material for food. They are found everywhere around the world, from rainforest to desert, stream to ocean, and poles to the equator.

Plants, animals and fungi do not live separately in Australia's ecosystems but are strongly interlinked. Many of our plants such as eucalypts, wattles, native heaths and orchids can thrive in poor soils because they have beneficial fungal partners. Many of our native wildlife such as bandicoots, potoroos and beetles depend on fungi for their food or habitat.

Research is beginning to discover just how fungi can help reduce the likelihood of extinction of plants, animals and loss of ecological communities.



Tremella-fimbriata



Calostoma-fuscum



Mycena-interrupta



Clavicornia-sp.



Mycena-epipterygia



Marasmiellus-affixus



Ruby-mycena



Ramariopsis-crocea



Astraeus-hygroetricus