

Fungus among us!

26.3.2026 - | Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs

UK first for Sussex nature reserve - member of public stumbles on rare find.

Visitors to England's National Nature Reserves (NNRs) now have even more reason to explore, after a remarkable discovery.

A fungus never recorded before in the UK, has been found at the 150-hectare Kingley Vale National Nature Reserve in West Sussex. It comes almost 20 years after a similar discovery in Spain.

Blue-Based Earthtongue, also known as *Microglossum cyanobasis*, was spotted by a member of the public in the reserve's ancient yew woodland.

Liz Frost, the fungi enthusiast who made the discovery, said:

I was so excited to stumble upon this extraordinary tiny, delicate tongue shaped fungus while exploring at Kingley Vale National Nature Reserve.

Little did I know, I had just made the first ever UK sighting of the Blue-Based Earthtongue.

The fungus is hard to spot. Small, well-camouflaged, and easy to miss. It's about 45-55mm tall with delicate, fragile stems. What makes this species stand out is its subtle bluish-green coloration, especially near the base. This tint is quite unusual among fungi and helps experts distinguish it from close relatives. The species partly gets its name from *cyanobasis*, meaning blue base.

This exciting find serves as a reminder that these protected spaces still hold secrets, and that careful stewardship of the natural environment continues to yield extraordinary results.

Rachel Guy, manager of Kingley Vale National Nature Reserve for Natural England, said:

The discovery of the Earthtongue fungus shows off high-quality habitats and highlights the value of our 224 National Nature Reserves in England. These special places of exceptional ecological value are a credit to everyone who looks after them.

The presence of the fungus signals undisturbed, nutrient poor grasslands and long-established woodland soils. These environments are becoming increasingly rare due to fertilisation, drainage, ploughing, and land-use change.

The reserve sits within the South Downs National Park, near Chichester, and contains one of the finest ancient yew forests in Europe, with trees estimated to be at least 500 years old.

The reserve is open to the public. Livestock graze the site year-round, so visitors are asked to always keep dogs on a lead.

Background:

- Blue-Based Earthtongue, or *Microglossum cyanobasis*, was identified with support from the British Mycological Society and confirmed via DNA sequencing.
- *Microglossum cyanobasis* was first discovered in northern Spain in 2009.
- Read the blog here: A Rare Fungi Discovery at Kingley Vale National Nature Reserve: The First UK Sighting of the Blue-Based Earthtongue - Natural England
- Natural England manages about two thirds of England's National Nature Reserves. The remaining reserves are managed by organisations approved by Natural England. For example, the National Trust, Forestry England, RSPB, Wildlife Trusts, landowners, and local authorities.
- Kingley Vale NNR covers 150 hectares within the South Downs National Park, West Sussex.
- Find your nearest National Nature Reserve at gov.uk
- Spokespeople are available on request.

Contact - Defra Group press office: Communications_SE@environment-agency.gov.uk / 0800 141 2743. Journalists only.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/fungus-among-us>