

Poronia erici (Lohmeyer & Benkert 1988) Small Dung Button

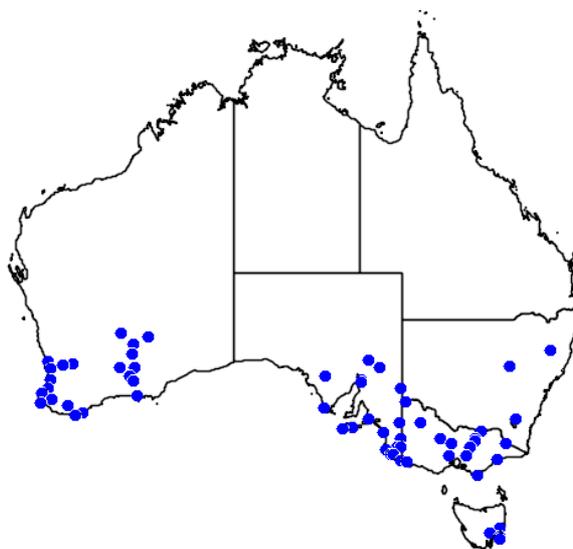
Phylum: Ascomycota Class: Sordariomycetes Order: Xylariales Family: Xylariaceae



Photo of *Poronia erici* on herbivore (wallaby) dung, Franklin, Tasmania. © Heather Elson

Poronia erici (Poor-oh-knee-ah eric-eye) is found on the dung of native marsupials and, more recently, introduced herbivores. This widespread species is fairly common and is found singularly or in groups in native forests and woodlands, heaths, pastures. This species is saprotrophic, feeding on the nutrients and cellulose found in dung but more specifically it is a *coprophilic* or 'dung-loving' (copr- meaning 'dung' and phil-, -phile meaning 'love') (Fungimap 2005).

Height to 2 mm, diameter less than 6 mm; a round, flattened disc with tapering base; tough, dry, hard but not woody. Upper surface often slightly raised, flat or dish-shaped, white, grey or pale fawn, punctuated with small black holes (ostioles) through which spores are released. Lower surface dark grey-brown, smooth (Fungimap 2005). Spore colour dark brown (Bill Leithhead 2007).



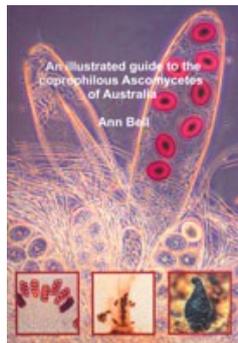
Distribution map for *Poronia erici* : Atlas of Living Australia http://biocache.ala.org.au/ws/density/map?q=Poronia_eric

The spores of *P.eric* survive passage through the gut, germinate and grow in the freshly deposited dung. The spores are deposited on vegetation, and are then consumed by herbivores to complete the cycle (Bell 2005).

If you want to try something fun, try collecting some marsupial dung and place it in a container, on moist, but not wet paper. After incubation you'll observe a sequence of fruiting bodies appearing on it over a few weeks.

To the naked eye *P.eric* looks very much like *Poronia punctata*, a species that was commonly recorded in Europe in the 19th century. For a long time the name *Poronia punctata* was regularly given to Australian collections of *Poronia*, but microscopic examination of Australian collections has shown differences and led to the realisation that *Poronia erici* is a common species in Australia (ANBG 2013). *Poronia erici* differs from *Poronia punctata* in having considerably larger and broader spores, is usually around <6mm in diameter (Fungimap 2005), whereas *P.punctata* is 10mm in diameter or more (Fungimap 2005), and a different substrate (hare, rabbit, goat, sheep and marsupial dung) as against horse and cow dung preferred by *P. punctata*(Lohmeyer 1994).

An excellent book is An illustrated Guide to the Coprophilous Ascomycetes of Australia by Ann Bell.



References

ANBG 2013, *Fungal ecology – Dung fungi*, <https://www.anbg.gov.au/fungi/ecology-dung.html>

Bell, A (2005) An Illustrated Guide to the coprophilous Ascomycetes of Australia. CBS, Utrecht, The Netherlands.

Leithhead, B. 2007, *Bill Leithhead's Fungi Pages – Poronia erici 1*, http://www.elfram.com/fungi/fungi_q/poreric_a.html

Fungimap (2005) '*Fungi down under : the Fungimap guide to Australian fungi*' edited by Pat Grey and Ed Grey.

Lohmeyer, T. R.1994, New European and Australian records of *Poronia erici*, Lohmeyer and Benkert, and a fairy tale concerning their possible relationship, *Mycologist* vol.8, pp.16–20.