



Hygrocybe polychroma

Richard Robinson, Science Division, Manjimup, richard.robinson@dec.wa.gov.au



© Richard Robinson

Species of *Hygrocybe* are commonly referred to as wax caps. *Hygrocybe polychroma* is widespread throughout the wetter areas of jarrah forest and woodlands, and coastal heath regions of the southwest. It's very variable in colour and intensity ranging from being entirely red or having combinations of red, orange and yellow.

Caps are 1-3.5cm diameter (sometimes larger), smooth, shiny or greasy, broadly dome-shaped at first then expand to become flat, red, orange red or orange yellow with a yellow margin, or sometimes entirely white. Gills are thick, variable in length with a waxy texture, generally pale orange yellow becoming lighter in colour towards the edge. Stems are up to 7cm tall, smooth, waxy, entirely red or orange red in the upper region then orange yellow and finally whitish at the base.

Other *Hygrocybes* may be red, orange or yellow, but *Hygrocybe polychroma* is characterised by its colour variations and large groups may have a mix of specimens of different colours with either, red, orange, yellow or even white being the dominant colour of individuals.

The scientific name refers to the texture and colour of the fruit body. *Hygr-*: moisture, humidity, *cyb-* or *cybe*: head, *poly-*: prefix meaning several or many, *chrom-*: bright colour, e.g., chrome-yellow.