Ramaria watlingii R.H.Petersen, *Notes Roy. Bot. Gdn. Edinburgh* **46**: 154 (1989)

A.M.Young, Apr. 2014

Fruiting body –12 × –12 cm; *apices* a shade of yellow to very pale ochre but becoming brownish with orange tints when old, and then concolorous with branches, bluntly rounded, frequently dichotomous with the two apical branchlets usually broadly diverging and often either at right angles to each other or even subtending an obtuse angle between them, some apical groups may resemble deer antlers, dry; *major branches* dark straw-yellow to pale ochraceous, numerous, cylindrical but flattened near the axils, –1 cm diam., *minor branches* dark straw-yellow to pale ochraceous, smooth, sometimes a little flattened; *axils* broadly round; *stipe* –3 × –1.5 cm, separate or fasciculate, white to yellowish but superiorly becoming concolorous with the branches, aborted branches present. *Flesh* near the base yellowish with brown tints, not gelatinous or slippery; no colour changes on bruising were recorded. *Odour* and *taste* not recorded. *Rhizomorphs* not recorded.

Basidiospores 7.9–11.9 × 4.3–6.1 µm, mean 9.7 × 5.1 µm, Q: 1.6–2.5, mean Q: 1.89, ellipsoid, narrowly ellipsoid or sub-cylindrical, inclusions absent or sometimes with a single large inclusions, hilar appendix prominent and often curved, ornamentation of randomly scattered flattened warts or ridges which may be occasionally/rarely arranged longitudinally, profile moderately rough; *basidia* 72–91 × 8–10 µm, mean 80.4 × 8.6 µm, 4-spored, clamped; *sterigmata* up to 7 µm long, distinctly long-conical, straight; *branch trama* composed of thin-walled, clamped, hyaline hyphae 4–12 µm diam., neither ampulliform septa nor gleoplerous hyphae observed; *stipe trama* composed of hyaline, thin-walled and slightly thicker- walled, clamped, parallel to slightly interwoven hyphae 5–14 µm diam.; *ampulliform septa* present, –14 µm diam., thin-walled or slightly thicker-walled and with abundant stalactitic ornamentation; *gleoplerous hyphae* not seen.

Habit: gregarious amongst litter directly on disturbed ground by the roadside. *Habitat*: cool temperate rainforest with *Eucalyptus* spp. (Tasmania) or dry eucalypt forest (Victoria).

Known distribution: Vic, Tas.

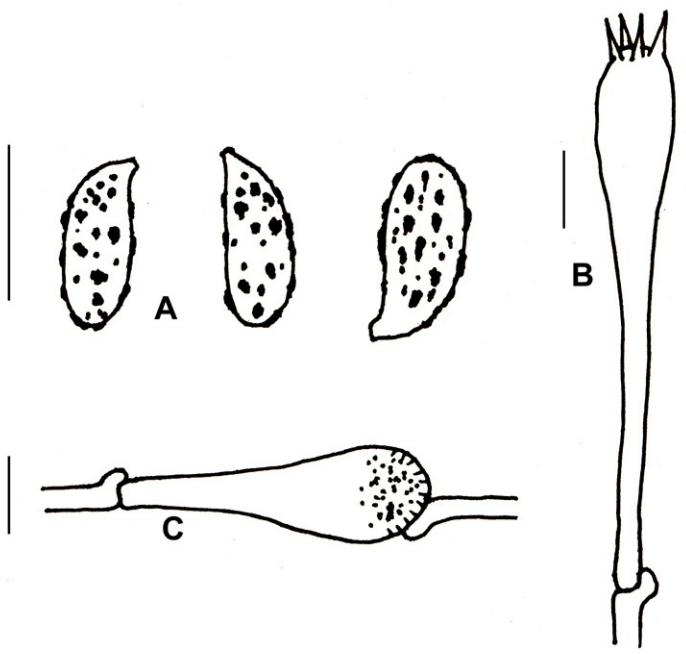
Notes: Until the comparatively recent collection of this species from Tasmania, the only known reference for *Ramaria watlingii* was the sole collection from Gembrook (Victoria) made by Petersen and Watling in 1982. Unfortunately, all of their type collection was sent to Edinburgh so that no reference material was lodged at any Australian herbarium - an all too common and very regrettable practice.

Dr Pat Harrisson's collection from Big Tree Reserve (Tasmania) in 2007 allowed images of this species to at last be published and these correlate extremely well with the line drawings presented by Petersen and Watling in their paper on this species (and other Australian species of *Ramaria*) published in 1989.

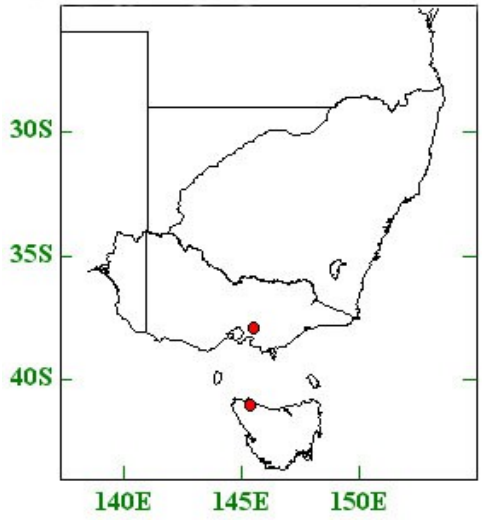
Ramaria watlingii belongs to what may be called the "difficult group" of yellowish species of *Ramaria* which are often very hard to separate, but *R. watlingii* can be very readily distinguished through its rather remarkable apices. These apices usually occur in pairs (dichotomous) but the two subtended apical branchlets extend at a right angle to each other and in some instances can even subtend an obtuse angle. Also, when developing, this species can produce clusters of apices that resemble the antlers of a deer (cornute) and this unusual apical structure can be seen in the second image.

Ramaria watlingii. This fruiting body was photographed at Big Tree Reserve, north-west Tasmania. Careful examination will show the two apical branchlets subtend angles of 90° or even greater. © P.Harrisson.

Ramaria watlingii. Immature fruiting bodies at Big Tree Reserve showing finger-like and antler-like aggregations of apices. © P. Harrisson



Ramaria watlingii, microdata from Big Tree Reserve collection. A. basidiospores; B. basidium; C. ampulliform septum. Each scale bar = 10µm. © A.M.Young. (One spore above displays the longitudinal arrangement of warts that can occur in this species. Spores with this longitudinal arrangement may be rare to frequent.)



Ramaria watlingii. Known Australian distribution.

Acknowledgements
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