

# sarah lloyd nature's miniature jewels



'Slime mould' is not a term that elicits excitement in most people, nor does it conjure up images of exquisite beauty or give an inkling of their distinctiveness. For no other organism transforms from single-celled amoebae to a moving feeding plasmodium, from which arise spore-bearing 'fruits' that rarely exceed 2 mm high.

Slime moulds – also known as Myxomycetes – have baffled scientists for centuries and have been placed in

the plant, fungi, animal, and protista kingdoms. They are now classified as Amoebozoans and appeared on Earth approximately 600 million years ago.

Sarah Lloyd has studied slime moulds in the tall wet eucalypt forest that surrounds her home at Birrallee in northern Tasmania since 2010. During that time she has taken hundreds of photographs including

'time lapse' series that illustrate the remarkable changes the plasmodia undergo as they form fruiting bodies; her photographs taken with a camera on a stereo microscope show the variety of their miniature forms; and photographs taken with a camera on a compound microscope show the intricate beauty in their microscopic structures.

Temperate forests of the world are known to be rich in slime moulds so Sarah is perfectly located to search for these unpredictable, ephemeral and consequently little-known organisms. She has collected over 10% of known species worldwide of which at least three are new to science: two are currently being described by researchers in Spain and Ukraine, and a third was named *Alwisia lloydiae* in her honour.

