

THAT BROWN FOAM

There are times when what you find is not at all what you expected. That has happened to me this fall when I came upon brown foam that I found in brooks or in gullies where water had flown before.



I had seen this kind of foam in the past, usually in spring or fall, and was intrigued as to its composition. This year, some masses were modest, but others were positively huge. But no matter its size, this foam was inconsistent; poking a finger through it was like poking a finger through thin air. So obviously, I had to take a sample to be studied under the microscope.

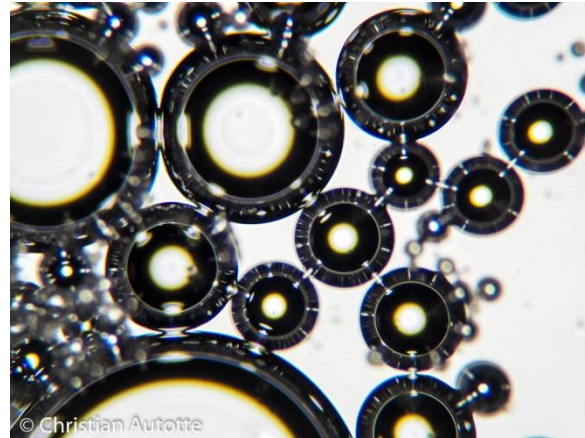
I was expecting to see some bacteria or at least some other microorganisms in that foam, but that's not what I found at all...





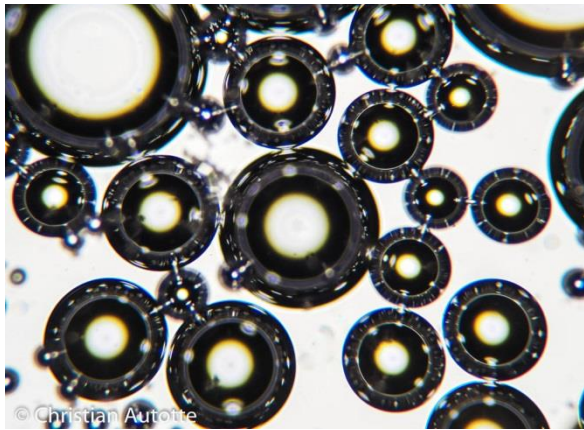
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100x



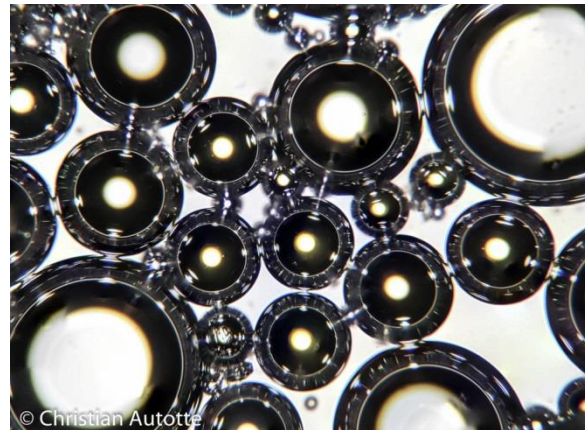
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100x, stack of 9 pictures

All that I found were bubbles of various sizes. While not alive, they gave me some interesting images. Their appearance changed as I played with the focusing knob. At times, the bubbles looked like illustrations of molecular or atomic structures. Most shots I made were single images, but I tried a few stacked photographs that were successful.

Failing to find anything moving in that foam, I went to the Web to figure out what it's made of. As it turns out, most of the time the origin of the foam is simply dissolved organic matter and as such could be compared to a frothy tea. The brown colour comes from tannin dissolved from leaves and forest soil. Elsewhere (i.e., close to cities), brown foam could be the result of pollution, so be careful if you want to handle these...

So while I may not have found anything alive and moving in there, I did get some interesting pictures, satisfied my boundless curiosity, and learned a little more about the natural world I live in...

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