

SVIMS

South Vancouver Island Mycological Society

Meeting and Presentation

When: Thursday, May 2, 2019, 7:00 pm

Where: Pacific Forestry Centre
506 West Burnside Road
Saanich, BC

What: Talk on

" Myrmecos and Mycelia: A tour through
the shared world of ants and fungi. "



Ants are regarded as one of the most highly evolved groups of social animals on the planet. They have mastered cooperative living not only among themselves but also in partnership with other organisms. American leafcutter ants provide a perfect window into this symbiotic world. Over the course of millions of years they have developed an unbreakable bond with dozens of species of fungi, which they cultivate much in the same way we humans cultivate corn and other crops. This talk provides a broad overview of the biology and ecology of leafcutter ants and their fungal symbionts, touching on other insect fungus-farmers along the way. Not all ant-fungi relationships, however, are so fruitful. On the other side of the world, in the tropical forests of Asia, carpenter ants are plagued by the fungus *Cordyceps*, a parasite which burrows into their flesh, consumes them from the inside out, and slowly takes over their bodies. We follow a gruesome journey inside the body of an ant which loses control of its limbs, guts, and eventually, its brain, becoming a slave to the fungus within.

Who: Yonathan Uriel

Growing up in the damp and delightful Fraser Valley in British Columbia, Yonathan cultivated, from a young age, an interest in all the small and slimy things that occupy the undergrowth of the great temperate rainforests of this region. Yonathan has had a lifelong interest in the private lives of insects and has published papers on topics ranging from bumblebee food preferences to the microbiome of blow flies. In 2017, he completed a BSc in molecular biology at Simon Fraser University, where he is currently working on a Masters degree in insect evolution.