

Fungifama



The Newsletter of the South Vancouver Island Mycological Society
January 2002

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SVIMS web site: www.svims.ca

Dues: \$15.00 per year per household, payable in January by cheque made out to SVIMS or by cash at meeting.

Meetings: First Thursday of the month (no meetings December, January, July, and August), 7:00 p.m. sharp at the Pacific Forestry Centre, 506 Burnside Rd. W., Victoria. Lots of free parking. The meeting room is near the main entrance door. Non-members welcome.

RED MUSHROOM !!!

If this newsletter was mailed to you with a red mushroom stamped on the envelope, it is time to send your membership dues to Jean Johnson, SVIMS Treasurer, Membership & Subscriptions Manager.

Monthly Meetings:

Saturday, January 19 Survivors' Banquet
See below for details.

Thursday, February 7

Paul Kroeger, Vancouver Mycological Society, will open the new mushroom year with a presentation on "The spring mushroom season".

Thursday, March 7

Swann Gardner, Cultivated Forest Cooperative of Denman Island, will tell us about the experiences of his Cooperative with fungus-based enterprise including growing edible mushrooms, saving fish-bearing streams, and producing nutraceuticals.

Thursday, April 4

Christine Roberts will talk about and demonstrate mushroom illustrations in books, stamps and other media.

Survivors' Banquet

Saturday, January 19, 2002. 6 p.m.

In the Kempster Building at the Horticulture Centre of the Pacific, 505 Quayle Road, Victoria.

What to bring: This is a potluck affair and BYOB, so bring a potluck dish (big enough to serve you and 8 others) and a serving utensil. Mushroom dishes are welcome but not required.

What SVIMS provides: SVIMS provides coffee, tea, plates, cups and flatware. There is a microwave oven for quick re-heating of your culinary contributions. Cards will be provided for you to list the mushrooms or other special features of your culinary masterpieces. Or bring your own card already filled out.

Raffle: As in previous years, part of our entertainment for the evening will include a raffle of silly or sensible items. Please bring along a "gift" that you hope to part with by evening's end.

Entertainment: Marty Kranabetter from Smithers, BC, will talk about his research on the relation between timber harvesting and the mushrooms of the north coast of BC.

Helping out: Help with set-up by arriving at 5:00 or stay a little late to help clean up afterwards.

Forays and events

Christine Roberts may be organizing a winter foray to Royal Roads University in February. Ask her about it at the Survivors Banquet or call her at 478-2976.

Prez Sez

By John Dennis

I hope everybody had a very Merry Christmas and I look forward to sharing with you a healthy, prosperous and happy 2002. I've used up a lot of those dried Boletes, frozen chanterelles and pickled *Suillus*. Preserved specimens are always good but if you didn't store any, you can still hunt up some fresh mushrooms. With the warm, winter weather, I'm beginning to think we don't really have a definite season. There isn't a time that we can't go out for a walk in the woods or fields and find mushrooms. Our season is all year. Renata and I met Jim Jones at Capital Iron last week and he told us that there are still chanterelles fruiting in the woods at Bamfield. I might expect hedgehogs (*Dentinum repandum*) and winter oysters (*Panellus serotinus*), but chanterelles? If anybody can find them, Jim can. Maybe you can too, so don't stop looking for those much-prized edibles and do take advantage of some of those beautiful, sunny, winter days.

We have a new SVIMS Executive for 2002. Once again, I only accepted the President's position because there is such a dedicated and competent support team. As an introduction, here are your SVIMS Executive members:

- President: John Dennis
- Vice President: Christine Roberts
- Treasurer/Membership: Jean Johnson
- Refreshments: Al Witiuk

- Foray Organizers: Adolf & Oluna Ceska
- Fungifama Editor: Shannon Berch
- Directors at Large: Bernice Witiuk, Diane Luong and Justin Hodkinson
- Webmaster: Rob Countess
- Publicity: Diane Luong
- Executive assistants: Mary Hampson, Marilyn McNamara, Richard Winder (President Emeritus)

Welcome and thank you, all!

For those of you who missed the Mushroom Show at Swan Lake, it was a grand affair. Despite the dry season, there were lots of mushrooms. We were fortunate to have Bill Chalmers bring demonstration and educational materials on growing mushrooms from his company, Western Biologicals. Judging by the crowd hovering around the stage, Bill was an exciting addition. I did the rubber stamping for the kids and some adults (names withheld). Jocelyn brought scones and along with Astra sold the scones, sugar cookies (donated by the Kissingers) and pears (donated by Sharon Godkin) adding \$62.00 to the SVIMS coffers. Mary and Jean sold 2 T-shirts, 2 new memberships, and gave out 20 SVIMS membership applications. Public attendance for the show was 320 visitors and there was a VI Channel 12 exposure spot in the news. We appreciated the help we got from all the Swan Lake staff. I cannot thank the people who support this show enough. Those that go out and collect specimens to donate to the exhibit and those that spend the night and day identifying and labeling the mushrooms. Those that spend most of the day educating and explaining to visitors what fungi, SVIMS, and the mushroom hobby are. There are too many to list but you know who you are and the show's success and the club's success are due to you. Thanks, so very much!

Thanks to Shannon and Hoke for the fabulous field trip at the Horticulture Center of the Pacific. It was very productive, producing lots of very interesting mushrooms and lots of fun. I especially liked having the round tables so we could compare what other people were finding on the different

hikes. Coffee and cookies were also good. This was a great example of a single day foray.

Right around the corner is the Survivor's Banquet on Saturday, January 19th. Once again it is in the Kempster Building at the Horticulture Center of the Pacific. This year we are lucky to have Marty Kranabetter from Smithers, as guest speaker. Jean Johnson went to Smithers to take a course given by Marty and came back with glowing reports on his photographs and presentations. Please bring your favourite mushroom dish and be prepared to share the recipe. I, as usual, have some very "desirable" raffle gifts, so don't miss it!

Also right around the corner is our first meeting of the year at the Pacific Forestry Centre on Thursday, February 7th at 7 pm. Our guest speaker at that time will be Paul Kroeger, President of the Vancouver Mycological Society. He will talk on "The Spring Mushroom Season". Paul always gives a down-to-earth mushroom presentation, which will keep you interested and get your enthusiasm level up.

This year, the SVIMS Executive has lots of exciting meeting presentations aimed at making identification of mushrooms easier and hunting more exciting for amateur hunters. We are planning field trips to Royal Roads, Nanaimo lakes, Mesachie Lake, possibly Bamfield and are setting up some single day forays close to home. We are committed to helping you learn how to identify, cook and find more mushrooms. This is going to be a great mushroom year. Come join us!

Report on Lake Cowichan Salmon/Mushroom Festival

By Jocelyn Lalonde

Members of SVIMS and the Vancouver Mycological Society (VMS) participated in the Lake Cowichan Salmon/Mushroom Festival held on Sunday, October 14, 2001. The indefatigable Ingeborg Woodsworth organized the event.

The mushroom display was held in the Lake Cowichan Fire hall and attended by

about 75 people. Eileen and David Tamblin and the SVIMS participants of our Mesachie Lake Fall Foray including John Dennis and Renata Outerbridge provided about 50 species of mushrooms. Our fearless president had to do some high level negotiating, arm-twisting and I think even wrestling to get some of the better edibles such as the cauliflower mushroom (*Sparassis crispa*) and lobster mushroom (*Hypomyces sp*) for the display.

Eileen and David Tamblin from VMS presented a slide show as well as a display of wool and garments dyed using fungi. The range and depth of colours was impressive and captured the attention of many of the attendees.

Paul Kroeger from VMS and Bryce Kendrick from SVIMS were part of a field foray with Ingeborg.

Renata was surprised by a woman eating part of the display. When Renata told the woman that the white jelly pseudohydnum was affectionately called the spirit gummy bear (a common name coined by Andy MacKinnon - Ed.) the woman inquired whether it was edible. As soon as Renata said yes the woman popped it in her mouth and walked away.

John was very pleased with the enthusiasm and interest everyone showed. As an observer I think the enthusiasm was as much for his explanations, stories and humour as for the mushrooms. He had a crowd of women gathered around him and entirely enraptured.

It is always great to meet fellow mushroom enthusiasts and to share our interest in the incredible variety of nature. Thanks to everyone involved and especially to Ingeborg for including SVIMS in the festival.

Wrestling with *Cortinarius*

By Shannon Berch

A notoriously difficult genus to identify specimens to species, *Cortinarius* was the focus of the recent SVIMS presentation by Sharmin Gamiet. Sharmin encouraged us not to give up working with *Cortinarius* and to

begin by learning how to sort them to subgenus. Subgenus is a level of classification below genus and above species. In *Cortinarius* there are hundreds of species but only seven subgenera.

I admit that I am very cortinariophobic (have you ever noticed that on particularly dark and rainy days foraging in the forests, all of the mushrooms lurking about are Cortinarii?), but that, after Sharmin's presentation, I feel encouraged to face my demons and wrestle them into these seven subgenera.

Certain features that can be observed in the field are needed, such as whether the cap and stipe are viscid (slimy), whether the cap is hygrophanous (i.e. different in colour shade and translucence from the cap centre to its margin when you find the mushroom in the field), what the colour of young gills and the nature and colour of the veil, if present. In addition to these features that can be seen without magnification, some microscopic features are important. The presence and location of cystidia (large, sterile cells on gills among the spore-forming basidia and on other parts of the mushroom), features of the cuticle or skin of the cap, shape of spores, presence of clamp connections on hyphae, and reaction to application of certain chemicals must all be observed, especially if you hope or dare to proceed beyond the subgenus level.

Having noted all of this information, it is possible to fit Cortinarii into the subgenera briefly described below:

Dry-capped Cortinarii

Cortinarius: dark violet fruiting bodies, cap not hygrophanous, large cheilocystidia (on gill edge) and pleurocystidia (on gill face)

Dermocybe: bright yellow, red, greenish colours of young gills (anthroquinone pigments can be extracted in water and used for dying), cap not hygrophanous, occasionally fruiting body fluoresces in UV light (e.g. under black light),

Leproclybe: metallic appearance, cap not hygrophanous, fruit body fluoresces in

UV light, hyphae of cuticle at least 6 - 10 um thick (thicker than other subgenera), spores usually round or broadly elliptical

Sericeocybe: cap not hygrophanous, appearance silky, cap cuticle cellular (composed of blocky rather than elongate hyphal cells), spores sometimes round

Telamonia: cap hygrophanous, KOH turns cap black

Slimy-capped Cortinarii

Phlegmacium: cap viscid (slimy), stalk dry and often with bulbous base, colour reactions with Melzer's reagent, KOH, NH₄, lemon-shaped spores

Myxacium: cap and stalk viscid, at times spores round

With this information, it is relatively easy to get Cortinarii into subgenus, but getting them to species is another story. To do this requires that we hone our observation skills and learn which features are critical to going anywhere in identifying Cortinarii. To get started, it is essential that colour of the young gills and of the veil are noted on fresh specimens, preferably in the field, as well as taste and odour.

A few words of caution and clarification about this:

- If you taste Cortinarii or any other mushrooms, taste only a very small amount and always spit it out! Some Cortinarii are deadly poisonous.
- Colour of key features (especially blue or lilac colours of gills and stipe) can change very quickly, as quickly as it takes to pick, wrap and transport the specimen out of the forest and back to the home or lab.
- When looking for colour of gills, find very young gills because as the spores develop all of the gills turn some shade of brown or rusty brown.
- When looking for the veil, look for evidence of the universal veil, not the partial veil (which is called the cortina in *Cortinarius*). In *Cortinarius*, the universal veil remnants are not at all like universal veil remnants in *Amanita*, i.e. they don't look like a thick wool sock pulled on over the base of

the stalk. In *Cortinarius*, the universal veil remnants look more like a fine silk stocking ensheathing the stalk, sometimes (to continue the analogy) going well up over the knee.

Well, I'm proud to tell you that I got started on identifying *Cortinarius* species by learning all of the BC species of *Cortinarius* subgenus *Cortinarius*. Of course, there is only one species of *Cortinarius* subgenus *Cortinarius* in BC (*Cortinarius violaceus*) and it is big and purple and it absolutely never lurks.

Finding those elusive fungi

By Alex Kirby, BBC News Online environment correspondent

UK conservationists are celebrating the publication of the first list of the country's important fungus areas (IFAS). They say the list will help them to provide proper protection for fungi, which are often missed by wildlife surveys. The list contains details of more than 500 IFAS in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. It has been compiled by three groups - Plantlife, the Association of British Fungus Groups, and the British Mycological Society. They say no one has known till now where the UK's best fungus sites are, apart from some well-known ones like Epping Forest on London's eastern outskirts.

Experts say even the precise number of fungi species remains uncertain. Plantlife says a conservative estimate of the number of fungi species is about 12,000, with from 20 to 30 new species being discovered every year. But it believes the real number could be closer to 20,000.

Martin Harper of Plantlife said: "Fungi are of tremendous environmental importance, yet until now we have been unable to care for them properly because we simply have not had the relevant information. This interim list of IFAS will help target conservation efforts to ensure that key sites get proper protection. We also hope it will encourage further recording to improve our knowledge of this extraordinary group of organisms."

Fungifama on the Web

Check out the SVIMS web site for the continued updating of the newsletter section with Fungifama from the past. They make interesting reading. Many thanks to Richard Winder for scanning hard copies of the old documents so we can have them available to all. Thanks also to Phil Atkinson for converting the Word files into Adobe Acrobat and to Rob Countess for maintaining the web site.

News from the Web

From the web site of the Northern Ireland Fungus Group

<http://members.madasafish.com/~nifungi/index.htm>

Batrachochytrium dendrobatidis, the Frog Chytrid fungus responsible for some of the die-off of world amphibians, *Cryphonectria parasitica*, or Chestnut Blight that is responsible for the death of most of American chestnut trees, *Ophiostoma ulmi*, or the fungus that causes Dutch Elm disease and *Phytophthora cinnamomi* or Phytophthora root rot that kills many plants by reducing the movement of water and nutrients within the plant are the four fungi (in the broad sense) that have made it onto the World Conservation Union's Invasive Species Specialist Group (ISSG) list of the 100 Worst Invasive Alien Species.

(In fact there are 5 fungi on the list: *Aphanomyces astaci* is a freshwater fungus which is nutritionally dependent on and killing off crayfish. Check the list at <http://www.issg.org/database/welcome/> -Ed.)

Membership News

Welcome new members **Matt Larmour**, **Dr. Steven Aung** (Edmonton), **Gerald & Marlee Loiselle**, **Rene Zich** (Galiano Island).

Members **Richard Winder** and **Rob Countess**, who have taken part in the Oak Bay Beach Hotel mushrooms forays on Discovery Island, were quoted in Westjet's inflight magazine in an article entitled "Mushroom Madness".