

Fungifama



The Newsletter of the South Vancouver Island Mycological Society
April 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.

Monthly Meetings:

Thursday, May 2

Fred Rhoades, Part-time Instructor and Research Associate at Western Washington University, will give us "An introduction to mushroom ecology". It will be a "standard" type of informal slide talk with the only difference being that the slides will be 3-D! We even get to wear those cool glasses!

Thursday, June 6

To be announced... Perhaps a Mushroom Madness evening where you bring in mushrooms and we identify them as a group. Perhaps something else...

Forays

April 20th

This Saturday, John Dennis will lead a spring foray. The place he'll lead us to is still not confirmed, but John will meet enthusiasts in the north parking lot at the Pacific Forestry Centre at 1:00 pm. We can carpool or convoy to the site from there. Just remember, there are morels out there! Somewhere!

If you want more details as Saturday approaches, call John Dennis at 595-7499 (home) or 363-0684 (work).

Annual SVIMS Cowichan Lake Foray, October 25, 26, 27

Jean Johnson has come to our rescue in the face of the closure of the Cowichan Lake Research Station Conference Facility, past site of our annual fall foray. She has reserved the Cowichan Lake Education Camp for the weekend of October 25, 26, and 27.

Price: Friday, Sat accommodation + Sat. meals + Sun. breakfast = same as research station + GST = \$110.75

Price details: They price it out at \$17.25 for anything, accommodation or any meal, for those people who only want part of the weekend.

Accommodation: Motel style units for 2 with private shower/bath. Log cabin unit (1 only) for 4 with private shower/bath.

www.uniserve.com/cownet/townlc/

Priest Lake Idaho

The Spokane Mushroom Club is holding their Fall Foray at Priest Lake Idaho from September 26-29, 2002. Foray leader, Dave Jones, can be contacted at piebiter@icehouse.net or 13318 East Saltese Road, Spokane, WA 99216-0433.

Prez Sez

- **by John Dennis**

The Morels are up! Proof was a bowl full at the last SVIMS meeting. No, they weren't mine. I don't have a secret spot, at least not nearby. I did try to show members, from the PFC herbarium records, where and when these delectable fungi have been found. There are lots of spots in the Victoria area. I also felt a few pictures would get the adrenaline flowing. It wasn't needed. The real morels sitting in the bowl, on the table, in front of me, were enough. They were found at Thetis Lake, probably outside the border of the park. Richard Winder reported that his secret patch somewhere in Sooke is starting to produce. To prove it, he brought to PFC one of the 38 he found in only one of his secret patches (April 14th). It was a beautiful specimen. At least we know that the morels are up! It is time to start looking everywhere.

Richard also brought in a bag of the winter chanterelle or yellow legs, (*Craterellus tubaeformis*). This is a good edible that can be found in older forests and, like the hedgehog, late fall and early winter is its normal season. April seems a bit bizarre? You never can tell with these fungi.

For those of you who missed the last couple of meetings, you missed a couple of very entertaining and informative presentations.

Swann Gardner gave a lot of information at the March meeting on how his group on Denman Island is making a living at growing fungi with a system that appears to be environmentally friendly and productive. Judging by the wealth of questions he got, the members were very interested and wanted more details on how they are doing it.

Christine Roberts gave us quite a show at the April meeting on how our artistic side can be used and appreciated by our scientific, analytical side. She gave us lots of examples of fungi in art and examples of how to do it ourselves. She even provided a sketchbook and pencils if you got the most right answers to the fun quiz that she gave. Thanks Christine!

I am really looking forward to the May meeting with Fred Rhodes and his 3D presentation. Somebody will have to stop me from trying to pick the mushrooms off the screen.

Shannon Berch and I have been tossing around the idea of giving a beginner's mushroom course early this fall, possibly 2 evenings before our October meeting. Many of our presenters are experts and specialists and what they present can be technically beyond the beginner's stage. We would like to give the course, so that everybody can be fluent with at least some of the terminology and know what to look for and where to look for help when they find some specimens. Would you like to sign up?

Report on Foray March 30 to the Horticulture Centre of the Pacific

- **by Shannon Berch**

Participants: Chris Tomaschuk, John Preidt, Gerald Loiselle, Ann Freidank, Ian Gibson, Shannon Berch.

The foray started with Hoke Holcomb providing an introduction to greenspace stewardship on the Glendale Lands, which are shared by the south end of the Horticulture Centre of the Pacific, Camosun College, Vancouver Island Technology Park, and Leyritz Park.

We then set off on trails that are being built as part of the Capitol Regional District's Greenways Trail System and the East-West Trail. It was a lovely morning for a stroll through the woods and although it was mycologically early, we still found a few fungi. The Trilliums and Erythronium lilies were bursting into flower and the skeletons of bats and birds we found suggested that

the area by the Viaduct Flats wetlands was inhabited by avian predators. In fact, osprey, red-tailed hawks, owls and bald eagles have been seen to feed at the forest/water edge.

However, one of the foray members did comment that this foray was characterized by the discovery of more eggs than mushrooms; despite it's being Easter weekend, they weren't bunny eggs. The fungi that we found were identified as:

Stereum hirsutum

Phaeolus schweinitzii (many old specimens)

Hygrophorus purpurascens

Mycena sp. (perhaps with a bleach odour)

Inocybe sp.

The paucity of mushrooms spurred me to act on a promise that I had made to myself to start learning the lichens of the area. I chose a lovely little lichen that was sheathing the upper branches of shrubs in orange. According to my photo-id adventure in the fabulous new book "*Lichens of North America*" by Irwin Brodo, Sylvia Duran Sharnoff and Stephen Sharnoff, the lichen is probably *Xanthoria candelaria*, the Shrubby sunburst lichen.

Ann tried using the dyers' polypore (*P. schweinitzii*) to colour Easter eggs, but she tells me that the result was an uninteresting brown, not nearly as nice as what one gets with onion peels.

New Zealand : The Year of the Fungus

• from Landcare Media Release: Tuesday, 26 February 2002

2002 may seem like just another year, but a Landcare Research scientist has declared it the Year of the Fungus. Landcare Research mycologist (fungal scientist) Dr Peter Buchanan says from now until February 2003, fungi will be at the forefront of several important scientific events, and will even be appearing on mail.

In March, New Zealand Post issued six stamps, each with a photo of a New Zealand fungus.

In May the 16th annual Fungal Foray will be held in Haast. This six-day event usually attracts about 50 participants, both from the science world and the general

public, from here and overseas. Landcare Research mycologists established the foray during the 1980s, and it is held every autumn in a different region of New Zealand. Species are collected with the Department of Conservation's permission, and are deposited in recognised fungal collections. Their names are then worked out, and dried specimens of the collected fungi are put in one of two herbaria (fungal museums) in New Zealand. The largest fungal herbarium is at Landcare Research in Auckland, where Dr Buchanan and other mycologists work along with 65,000 dried specimens of fungi. These are mostly from New Zealand and nations of the South Pacific. " During these Fungal Forays we often discover new fungi, never seen before. That makes the study of fungi especially exciting in New Zealand. Primary school children are especially good at finding fungi. Their height and sharp eyes give them a distinct advantage over adults."

In July, Landcare Research will launch a new series of publications, 'Fungi of New Zealand'. The books will introduce, illustrate and describe important fungi groups.

In August, the series will be officially launched at the four-yearly International Mycological Congress in Oslo, Norway. Dr Buchanan and other New Zealand mycologists will be among an expected 1,500 mycologists present from around the world.

In November, the first list of rare and threatened New Zealand fungi will be published.

The Year of the Fungus will conclude in February 2003, when Christchurch hosts the 8th International Congress of Plant Pathology. This is the world's major conference on diseases of plants, most of which are caused by fungi.

"This is a great year to publicise the importance and relevance of fungi to the environment and to humanity," Dr Buchanan says. "Fungi are everywhere, but many people do not notice them. With autumn approaching (down under! - Ed.), now is the time to keep an eye out for mushrooms and

other fungi fruiting in forests, parks, lawns and gardens.”

Dr Buchanan says about 6,000 species of fungi have been recorded in New Zealand, and it is believed another 14,000 are yet to be found. Many of the 6,000 known species are only found in New Zealand, and some of these are rare and endangered.

Slimy, yes, but clever

- **from the New York Times (October 4, 2000)**

- **submitted by Jean Johnson**

Slime molds are people, too. Well, not exactly, but Japanese researchers have shown that they display what seems to be a primitive kind of intelligence.

To demonstrate this, the scientists conducted a new version of the classic animal-in-a-maze experiment. For a rat hunting cheese, however, they substituted a slime mold stalking ground oat flakes in a block of agar.

Acellular slime molds, which grow on bacteria, fungi, and decaying organic matter, exist most commonly as plasmodia, large amoebalike cells with many nuclei. They seek food by sending out tendril-like appendages called pseudopodia.

The Japanese researchers described setting up a maze consisting of plastic film, which slime molds will not grow on, overlaid on a growing surface. Two agar blocks were placed at different exit point. Without fail, a large slime mold in the maze changed its shape, shrinking in dead-end areas while, in those areas that formed the shortest distance between the blocks, reorganizing into a single, thick pseudopodium. Even the slim mold, these researchers suggest, knows how to maximize its foraging efficiency by taking the shortest line between two points!

(Editorial comment by Jean: Seems we foraging shroomers use the same strategy, especially going up hill.)

A taste for mushroom gardens

- **by Jack Aldridge, Saturday, March 16, 2002**

- **submitted by Bryce Kendrick and Jean Johnson**

There's not a green thing in sight in the new garden plot, over which a dedicated band of trusty volunteers has labored long and hard. A disaster?

To the contrary, Ken Litchfield, coordinator of the effort, couldn't be happier. For there are brown, purple, yellow, tan and orange growths of weird shapes and sizes popping up everywhere and just beneath the surface, the main garden bed is infiltrated with pervasive strands of white, stringy material.

"Welcome to our mushroom garden," Litchfield said as he enthusiastically pointed out clusters of fruiting fungi. "There's still an awful lot of work to do but we think our new location is going to be great."

Litchfield teaches at the Randall Museum in San Francisco on a range of subjects, from jewelry-making to backyard pond-planting, but one of his real loves is working with the cultivation group of the Mycological Society of San Francisco (MSSF).

The society, which holds its monthly meetings at the Randall, sponsors the museum's mushroom garden, which has traditionally graced the courtyard outside the building. An ambitious, continuing renovation project provoked the need to move the garden this year.

Satellite gardens

"We're excited about the concept of satellite mushroom gardens around the Bay Area and this project has given that effort a big push," said Litchfield. Eventually, the mushroom garden at the Randall will be re-established in splendor. For now, attention is turned to the new plot, worked in cooperation with the Presidio Trust and Presidio Community Gardens.

New Canadian mycological resource

- **by Bryce Kendrick**

Please visit www.fungi.ca, which is now being developed as a new Canadian mycological resource. Our Webmaster, Clint Kendrick, has already posted some notable

Canadian sources of mycological information, and more will be added in the days to come.

We invite you to explore the material already at the site, which is being offered as a public service by Mycologue Publications (www.mycolog.com).

Let us know what you think, and give us your suggestions for additional links...

10th International Fungi & Fibre Symposium, 15-19 August, 2001

Rovaniemi, Finland. *Contact:* Kirsti Palmén,

Email: k-m.palmen@pp.fimnet.fi

Dying with mushrooms, lichens, berries, and other natural products on special media like wools, silk, paper, etc. Also papermaking and paper-dying, printing on textiles, and watercolouring with these dyes. Classes for beginners through advanced. All this in vibrant central Finland, near the Arctic Circle.

Did you know...?

- from <http://bluebook.state.or.us/kids/symbols/symbols.htm>

The 1999 Legislature recognized the Pacific golden chanterelle (*Cantharellus formosus*) as the official mushroom of the State of Oregon. The Pacific golden chanterelle is a wild, edible fungus of high culinary value that is unique to the Pacific Northwest. More than 500,000 pounds of the Pacific golden chanterelles are harvested annually in Oregon, representing a large portion of the commercial mushroom business.

(Ed. note: Oregon also appears to have a State beverage: milk, and a State dance: the square dance.)

Strange 'facts' about fungi

- gathered by Michael McBain, Fungimap Webmaster, Australia
- <http://calcite.apana.org.au/fungimap/strange.html>

Reindeer go crazy, literally crazy, for fly agaric mushroom (*Amanita muscaria*), which the Lapp people traditionally used for its hallucinogenic effects.

Lapp shamans used to eat the mushroom during the midwinter pagan ceremonies of Annual Renewal. The first effect of eating it was a deep coma-like slumber. When the shamans awoke the drug stimulated their muscular systems, so that a small effort produced spectacular results - the intoxicated person perhaps making a gigantic leap to clear the smallest obstacle.

The effect on animals was generally the same, and a mushroom-maddened super-reindeer traditionally guarded each shaman. When missionaries first reached Santa's native Lapland, they found a thriving pagan myth of reindeer flight. Rather than oppose it, they shrewdly assimilated the stories into the folklore of Christmas and Saint Nicholas.

This then, is the true origin of the legend of Santa's flying sleigh. The colour scheme of his outfit is taken from the unmistakable red and white cap of the fungus.

Lapps still scatter the mushroom in the snow to round up reindeer.

(Ed. note: *Amanita muscaria* scattered in the snow? Flying reindeer? Isn't mushroom lore fun!)

Facts about Fungi from the North West Fungus Group, UK

- <http://fungus.org.uk/nwfg.htm>

The North West Fungus Group (NWFG) was established in 1994 as a regional umbrella group to promote an interest in fungi in the Northwest of England and Wales, UK. We cover the counties of Cheshire, Cumbria, Greater Manchester, Lancashire and Merseyside in England, and the vice-counties of Denbighshire and Flintshire (now part of Clwyd) in Wales.

The facts:

The number of known species of fungi is about 69,000 but that in the world has been conservatively estimated at 1.5 million (Mycological Research, 1991, 95: 641 - 655).

An individual honey fungus *Armillaria bulbosa* is claimed to be the world's largest and oldest living organism - estimated to be some 1,500 years old and more than 10,000

kg in weight, its underground network of hyphae occupies 15 hectares (Nature, 1992, 356: 428 - 431).

Mushrooms are quite capable of forcing their way up through asphalt and lifting paving stones.

People have been using fungi for purposes other than food for thousands of years. Tinder material prepared from the bracket fungus, *Fomes fomentarius*, and pieces of the polypore, *Piptoporus betulinus*, were found with the frozen remains of a Neolithic man discovered in an alpine glacier in 1991. The remains have been dated to between 3350 and 3100 BC (Mycological Research, 1998, 102: 1153 - 1162).

Ants first started to cultivate fungi in underground gardens around 50 million years ago. Today, leafcutter ants remove more of the vegetation in a tropical American rainforest than any other group of animals, including mammals. Their fungal partners break down cellulose providing the ants with a predigested source of food (New Scientist supplement, 6 March 1999).

When is a worm not a worm?

from <http://www.astdhppe.org/infect/ringworm.html>

When it's ringworm. Ringworm is a contagious fungus infection that can affect the scalp, the body, the feet (athlete's foot), or the nails.

People can get ringworm from: 1) direct skin-to-skin contact with an infected person or pet, 2) indirect contact with an object or surface that an infected person or pet has touched, or 3) rarely, by contact with soil.

Caterpillar fungus

• from <http://www.go-symmetry.com/cordyceps.htm>

• from <http://www.herb.lsa.umich.edu/kidpage/Caterpillar.htm>

Caterpillar Fungus is also known as: *Cordyceps sinensis*, Cordyceps fungus, Dong Chong, Xia Cao Tochukas, Deer Fungus.

In Chinese medicine Cordyceps fungus is described as a very effective herb for treating circulatory, respiratory, immune, sexual dysfunction, as well as a host of other health problems. It was also classified as a general health tonic because of Cordyceps capability to improve energy, stamina, appetite, endurance, and sleeping patterns. In tradition Chinese medicine Cordyceps is used for the kidney and lungs meridians.

Chinese athletes who used Cordyceps in their athletic training program surprised everyone including sports authorities when they broke the 10,000-meter World track record in 1993.

In the old days, Chinese people thought that the caterpillar fungi were worms. However, after years of study, it was found that it really is a fruiting body produced by the fungus, *Cordyceps sinensis*, on dead caterpillars of the moth *Hepilus fabricius*. Spores of *Cordyceps sinensis* grow inside the caterpillars, filling the caterpillar with filaments (hyphae). When the caterpillar dies the fungus produces a stalked fruiting body that produces spores. The spores are spread in the wind to the next generation of caterpillars. Uninfected caterpillars pupate into relatively large primitive moths.

We have Cordyceps species native to BC. I wonder if they have the same medicinal properties as does the Chinese caterpillar fungus.

Membership News

Welcome new members **Rupert Evans, Gordon Foster & Anne Winter, Frank Widmer, Akiko Shewring, May Kald, Barry and Karen Philbrook, Linda Boyd, and Christa Imhof.**

Jim Jones' thesis defense is on Tuesday, April 16th at UVic. Best of luck, Jim!

Bryce Kendrick is in Ecuador. **Jean Johnson** is in Australia. Lets hope for some terrific, exotic mushroom pictures!

Rob Countess is offering some mushroom cultivation workshops and a morel picking tour. Check out www.nature-exploration.com if you are interested.