

Fungifama



The Newsletter of the South Vancouver Island Mycological Society
August 2004

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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.

Caution: The South Vancouver Island Mycological Society (SVIMS) newsletter, Fungifama, is not intended as an (online) identification or medicinal guide to mushrooms. There are risks involved in eating and in using wild mushrooms. The possibility may exist that you are allergic to a specific mushroom, or that the mushroom may be anomalous. SVIMS, Fungifama and the authors on this site warn that the reader must accept full personal responsibility for deciding to use or consume any particular specimen.

Prez Sez:

April

As the meeting took place on April 1st Jean Johnson and I hoped in vain to fool everyone with some very special mushrooms. How many of you were actually taken in - even for a moment? Go on, be honest, we really convinced you didn't we?

This month we had a visit and talk from Jim Ginns, who was the Curator of the National Mycological Herbarium in Ottawa before he retired. He has worked on wood decay fungi and those crust and resupinate fungi that grow on the undersides of dead branches. He showed slides and discussed the relationships between fungi and plants, including the rust fungi, some of which attack your apple trees, and others that make big orange gelatinous blobs on cedars.

Jim also showed slides of fungi from Manning Park, the range of altitudes, tree species and habitats makes this a good place to view diverse and unusual fungi, at least when it isn't as bone-dry as last year. On the Saturday following the meeting a group of folks took Jim to a "secret" location arranged by Adolf and Oluna Ceska. Bruce brought along his pet orchid for a bit of fresh air too, and I hope it enjoyed its day as much as we did. Having Jim along meant we learned about some of those wood decay fungi that often go unnoticed on the average foray. We trekked up through Douglas firs into a more open forest of madrones with some oaks and pines, and found a few Verpas and some Morels- and later some of those cute little puffballs that stand on tiptoe, *Geastrum quadrifidum* I think. We also found a rubber snake with a scarf tied round it, which leads me to ask: "What is the oddest thing you have found in

the woods while foraging?" Maybe it is worth a prize for the best non-fungal find. After some deliberation and checking with Arora (Mushrooms Demystified) and counting the spores in the ascii (8) we determined the *verpas* to be *V. conica*, an edible species. In the name of science we cooked them very well and ate them just to see if they were good. The conclusion we came to is that if that is all there is, well fine, but don't go out of your way to collect them.

Note that *Verpa bohemica* has two spores per ascus and although eaten by many can cause severe stomach cramps and loss of muscular coordination!

May

The hoped for Morel foray to the Okanagan area didn't quite materialize due to folks being sidetracked with work. There are individuals planning to nip out to the Okanagan to see if the commercial pickers have left anything. Richard Winder reports seeing planeloads of morels leave from there. Richard says there are several species that come up at different times so if you didn't get there early, you might still have a chance to find some over the long weekend.

The Pacific Forestry Centre has a tree-walk, where native species are planted and labeled and a nice little map with information already printed. John Dennis gave us all a copy of this map and we took advantage of the sunny evening to walk through the plantings and look at the shape, foliage, bark and seeds of each native tree species and share our knowledge of what fungi can be found under each.

It has been so dry that we didn't expect great volumes of fungi for the "Mushroom Madness" event, however, the few *Agrocybe praecox*, *Agaricus praeclarusquamosus*, *Ramaria*, *Mitrula elegans* and a mystery mushroom gave folks something to look at through the microscope without being overwhelmed. My secret tree provided a nice door prize of fresh Oyster

mushrooms and another crop for me at the weekend. I must have collected 20-30lbs of oysters from this tree this spring, plus a couple of crops last fall and summer, so it is worth checking your own secret trees at regular intervals.

We had a small and rather ill fated foray on Saturday, originally planned for the Duncan riverside area. A Mill-Bay parking lot meeting of the forayers decided to try out Spectacle and Oliphant lake areas instead. We didn't find much at all, but identified a nice stand of shore pine up on a hilltop off a logging road which could be good foraging grounds in the fall. Walking back along a logging road which two guys in a 4x4 had assured us led out to the road near the parking lot in 30-40 minutes, (yeah-right-maybe in a truck!) we got caught by a hailstorm then drenching rain. Finally we got to tarmac and Bob took off on a lane on the left, which turned out to be someone's driveway. On asking directions of the resident, the dear, sweet lady packed all us very soggy folks into her car and drove us back to our own cars, saving us another 20 minutes or more in the cold and wet.

Species list from Spectacle Lake area
Geopyxis vulcanalis
Helvella queletii
Nolanea holcoconiata
Mycena haematopus

Monthly Meetings:

Thursday, September 2nd:

Tyson Ehlers will be coming to talk to us about forest management and important edible fungi. Tyson is an ecologist and forest consultant working on Non-Timber Forest Products. He is an expert on pine mushroom ecology and has also been working on chanterelles. Tyson is sure to

give us insight on where to find these wonderful mushrooms. If you are intrigued by the value of this mushroom or just its unique culinary characteristics, don't miss this presentation.

Thursday October 7th:

Jim Jones, mushroom Guru from Bamfield, will be talking to us about mushrooms in that area and the Festival that he is organizing. He will also discuss the possibility of a SVIMS "taxonomic SWAT team" going up to help out with the mushroom display. Anyone offering to participate will be given free access to all festival activities including the mushroom derby, fungus feast potluck, slideshow and dance. For those who want to come, it may be well to book accommodations very soon as we will be very active in promoting the festival this year.

Thursday, November 4th: TBA

Events and Forays:

Mushroom Magic with the Sierra Club November 21, 2004 at 10:00 a.m.

Enter the magical world of mushrooms with local experts Oluna and Adolf Ceska. Explore the layers of a forest for fantastical local fungi. Meet at Metchosin Wilderness Park by the entrance sign off Clapham Drive

Announcements:

Jim Jones' Bamfield Second Annual Mushroom Festival

Bamfield Community Hall

Saturday, oct 23, 2004

\$5 admission includes entry to:

Monster Mushroom Derby

Mushroom Identification display

Forest Mushroom Walk

Mushroom Slide Show

Mushroom Cooking Contest

Mushroom Art Raffle

Sale - Wild Mushrooms, Mushroom Books,

Art, Crafts & Mushroom Snacks

Evening Fungus Feast - Your potluck contribution or \$15
Toadstool Stomp (dance) \$10 includes one beverage ticket

Other stuff offered by Jim Jones

Edible Mushroom Workshops and Forays

Every Saturday, rain or shine (except October 30)

September 18th to November 13th

Bamfield Community School

\$25 per person ~ family \$50

Learn which mushrooms are good, bad, or just yukky and enjoy a wonderful day treasure hunting in the forest.

Program

10:00am Hands-on mushroom identification workshop with fresh examples of local mushrooms at Bamfield Community School.

12:00 noon car pool to collecting area. Bring along your picnic lunch. Then blitz into the forest to pick mushrooms.

4:00 to 5:00 pm - return to Bamfield.

These mushroom days often end with an evening potluck dinner and mushroom cookery, depending on the weather, with our local mushroom fanatics around an outdoor grill at one of their homes.

Custom Mushroom Excursions

including identification workshops & cooking demos, hunting forays, slide show, gourmet mushroom meals and choice of accommodations can all be arranged for groups of any size.

Guided Mushroom Walks

\$30 per hr, (group share cost) min 4 hours

Jim Jones

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<http://www.alberni.net/jtjones>

Priest Lake Annual Foray

Hill's Resort, Priest Lake, Idaho

Sept. 24-26, 2004

The Spokane Mushroom Club, which recently celebrated its 39th birthday, is holding its annual foray at Hill's Resort in beautiful northern Idaho. Speakers will be Dr. Michael Beug and Judy Roger. For

registration information contact the Spokane Mushroom Club, P.O. Box 2791, Spokane, WA USA 99220-2791; call 509-328-2735; email the registrar at r.morozzo@worldnet.att.net; or visit the web site at www.Spokanemushroomclub.org.

Soma Camp Wild Mushroom Retreat

The Sonoma County Mycological Association (SOMA) presents the 8th annual

SOMA Camp a Wild Mushroom Retreat

with featured headline speaker Dr. Tom Volk
plus special guests Gary Lincoff, Paul Stamets, and Jim Trappe.

M.L.K. weekend
January 15-17, 2005

Mushroom Classes and Workshops

- Art of Dyeing
- Beginner ID
- Cultivation
- Epicurean Cooking
- Medicinal Uses
- Microscopy
- Myco-Remediation
- Paper Making
- Photography
- Truffle Hunting

Expert-led mushroom forays
Wild mushroom cuisine
Slide shows & presentations
Specimen tables
Classes and workshops
Great mushroom camaraderie

Information: 707-887-1888
camp@SOMAmushrooms.org
 SOMA, PO Box 73 Cotati, CA 94931
 View past Camps and print a registration form at our website,
www.SOMAmushrooms.org

Fees: \$105 until Nov. 15, \$225 after. Registration closes on Wed., January 5. Fee includes lodging, meals, and all activities. Sunday only fee: \$100, includes dinner feast, and all the day's activities...

Join us at a beautiful, comfortable, and spacious wooded camp in the mushroom-rich hills of west Sonoma County, 1 hour north of San Francisco.



Exotic Forays in Mexico

In its fifth year of organizing mushroom/travel adventures “south of the border” for small groups of fungi aficionados, **Mexican Mushroom Tours** is offering three, one-week mushrooming events for 2004. For details, see www.mexmush.com.

International Medicinal Mushroom Conference.

Port Townsend, WA. October 12-17, 2005.
For more information:

WWW.fungi.com/immc/

Articles of Interest:

Top Ten Lies Told By Mushroom Hunters
(from the Fungus-Amungus, Spokane Mushroom Club newsletter) July, August, September 2004)

- 10) They taste terrible. It's the fried butter I like.
- 9) Yes, as a matter of fact, I do own this property.
- 8) No, I'm not mushroom hunting. I love crawling through briar patches!

- 7) I don't know any good spots. Let's check yours.
- 6) Sure, I'll tell you where I found them.
- 5) No, I didn't find any mushrooms.
- 4) Of course I have permission to hunt here.
- 3) It's too early for morels.
- 2) I think these are poisonous...better give them to me for proper disposal.
- 1) The biggest mushroom I ever found had a shadow that weighed three pounds.

Recipe of the Month:

Following is a recipe for “The Prince”, *Agaricus augustus*. Unlike many hunters, this mushroom was not one of my favourites. That was, until Astra made this dish for me. She served it on polenta and it was wonderful!

Ingredients:

- Agaricus augustus*, “The Prince”
- Onions
- fresh tomatoes
- green peppers
- garlic
- salt
- black pepper
- oregano
- maggi seasoning

Sauté the onions until translucent. Add the mushrooms, garlic and green pepper. Sauté for another 3-4 minutes. Add the tomatoes, oregano and other seasonings. Add water or stock if needed to keep moist and keep from burning. Serve on polenta, rice or pasta.

Scientists Battle to Save Butternut

Researchers in Fredericton are trying to preserve an endangered species before disease wipes it out. It's the butternut under threat from a fungus. Judy Loo is searching for trees that could fall to a lethal fungus. She is an ecological geneticist with the Canadian Forestry Service and she is looking for butternut trees.

The tree produces a nut similar to a walnut. Scientists have to race against squirrels to collect them. Butternut has also been a favorite of generations of furniture makers because of its golden wood. Loo says they have just been listed as an endangered species in Canada.

Butternut has been declared endangered because there is a fungus that is assumed to have come to North America from Asia that causes a canker that is fatal to the tree. The canker has been spreading gradually from the south and western part of the butternut range in the US and is now in all of the provinces where butternut occurs in Canada. Scientists at the Canadian Forestry Service are trying to save the genetic diversity of the butternut before the canker disease takes its toll. The nuts themselves become infertile after six to nine months. So researcher Tannis Beardmore has developed a way to preserve just their vital parts. The nut itself contains a very large embryo and the majority of the tissue is nutrients to support the growth of the embryo and we remove that tissue and we are left with what is called a root shoot axis and it's just the root at one end and then the shoot at the top.

The embryo material is preserved in liquid nitrogen at 196 degrees below zero. So far it has remained viable for five years. That could mean a future for the butternut tree. Hopefully we will have some material that may be resistant and also with time research may eventually provide some sort of leads to mitigate the canker.

These researchers want the public to help them find more butternut trees so they can save their embryos in deep cold storage in case the endangered butternut is wiped out in the wild.

Anita Sharma, Roy Gjelstad, CBC News, Fredericton.

Judy Loo, Tannis Beardmore, Canadian Forest Service scientists.

A Taste of Morel Victory can be Addictive

An article by Margaret Went in the May 15th 2004 Globe and Mail

Anyone who moves to the country from the city is in for culture shock: They do things differently there. For instance, country people think we are insane to pay \$3.95 for a cup of foamy milk. They eat dinner promptly at six, and feel genuinely sorry for anyone who has to live in Toronto and breathe in all that smog.

But country life is not laid back. *Au contraire*. It, too, has status markers and ruthless competitions. Instead of Beemer envy, people have tractor-envy. Even weekenders have to have tractors. There's nothing like a shiny \$9,000 John Deere with lots of attachments to make you feel as if you're living the authentic life.

And this month marks the most ruthless competition of them all. May is Morel Month in Ontario. And everybody in the country knows that morels are serious business. Friendships are one thing, morels are another.

For example, I've known my neighbour, Hugh, for years. I know almost all his secrets. But I don't know where his morels are. All I know is that he shows up each May with heaps of shiny black ones, gloating. All his friends have tried to find out where he gets them, but he's not telling.

In case you're mycologically challenged, morels are fungi. They pop up in the woods in spring. They have an elongated cap that's wrinkled like a brain, and a pleasant nutty flavour. My husband and I spent years hunting for morels without finding any.

"What's your secret?" I begged Hugh, who is a Buddhist.

"The secret is that if you're looking for them, you won't find them," he said. As you can see, morel-hunting is very Zen-like. Morel-hunting is also a major escalation of the food-status stakes. Organic is all very well, but everybody does organic nowadays. Today, the highest-status food is food you've foraged for yourself. Forget farming. We're talking hunting and gathering.

Near us in the country is a very popular restaurant with a celebrity chef. It's famous far and wide for its natural, organic, and wild

food. Even Greenpeace has endorsed it. People book months ahead and drive two hours each way from the city in their SUVs to enjoy its earth-friendly approach to dining, which only costs \$150 a person (plus gas and wine). They eat trout from spring-fed ponds, tender dandelion greens, edible flowers, venison, fiddleheads and fungi, and discover what sturdy self-reliance and living off the land are really all about. Sometimes the chef even leads people through the woods so they can forage for themselves. Our friends Bob and Melissa (who live the simple country life in a designer barn) have a field of wild asparagus. We're sick with envy because we don't have one. Every spring, they invite us to help ourselves to the tiny little stalks that poke up through the ground. (Like morels, the wild asparagus is unavoidably phallic.) We compete to see who can snap off the most tender shoots. I always lose, because they're hard to see in the grass. "Stop looking," says Hugh, "and you'll see more."

There's something undeniably primal about foraging for food. It makes you feel ruggedly self-sufficient. It also gets you outside, which is more than you can say for Loblaws. Best of all is the thrill of the hunt. You never know when you're going to hit the motherlode. Every year, as we chow down on our morel omelettes, morel risottos and steak morel, we feel incredibly superior. After all, other people are actually paying \$40 or \$50 a pound for these things.

There are just two things to watch out for. Cut them in half before you cook them, so the bugs can jump out. And don't eat false morels by mistake, or you'll be sorry.

My own morel triumph occurred just about this time last year. It was after I had given up. I had looked for days, but obviously I wasn't sufficiently spiritually evolved. And then I saw it -- a giant patch, in plain view right by the road. I shrieked and fell on them. I was with some city people who'd never heard of morels and thought I was demented. I stuffed my pockets full, swore my companions to secrecy and took my haul to show it off to Hugh.

I made a giant morel risotto for all my friends, and I could tell they were impressed. We sat around and fantasized about living off the land if the Depression ever comes back. We would gather mushrooms from the woods and watercress from the ponds, berries from the meadows and wild apples from the roadside. We would keep bees and chickens. We'd go wild-turkey shooting in the summer and deer hunting in the fall, just like the country people do. (Not Hugh though. He's a vegetarian.)

But it's hard to keep up with the Buddhists. The last time I saw Hugh, he was bragging about his ramps. I had to ask him what they were. Ramps, he told me, are a kind of wild leek that you find in the woods in spring, and they're the latest thing in foraging. Of course, you have to know where to look. Or else you can pay \$150 to eat them at the famous restaurant up the road.

As I said, the country people think we're insane.

Membership News

Welcome new members Liz and John Mayzel.