

Fungifama

January, 1995

The newsletter of the South Vancouver Island Mycological Society

Vol. 2.1

South Vancouver Island Mycological Society

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Membership: \$15/year/family
(\$10 for students or seniors)

SVIMS meets the first Thursday of each month except December,
January, July, and August, at 7:00 p.m. at the Pacific Forestry Centre,
506 West Burnside Rd., Victoria.

WINDER'S WOODLOT

We're back again! January has come and just about gone, and here I am dissecting the innards of my computer so that I can get Fungifama out... Tsk. Rumor has it that the field trip committee is going to try to plan out the field trips plenty early this year, so that the erratic timing of the newsletter doesn't affect everyone's chance to participate. Fungus of the month in Saseenos is the beautiful Helvella lacuonsa. I've never seen one before, but they sprouted in my front lawn from November to January. Supposedly edible, the fungus has an unearthly, pure pearly white stipe with deep, convoluted pits and a deep black cap. So much for poetry. I'll leave most of the comments for others this month, since the checklist takes a bit of room. I intend to get a membership list into the next issue - until then, happy new year! -RSW

BLOWING IN THE WIND by B. Callan

Speaking of poetry, here are the lyrics (or reasonable facsimile thereof) of a song written in a moment of poetic inspiration at the SVIMS First Annual Survivor's Banquet, by Andy MacKinnon and Brenda Callan (set to the tune of "Blowing in the Wind").

How many roads must a man walk down
Before he finds a chanterelle?
And just how many logs must he step around,
Before he finds a morel?
How do you join S V I M S?
By contacting Hannah Nadel!

The spores, my friend, are blowing in the wind~ The spores are blowing in the wind

FROM THE PRESIDENT'S BASKET by Hannah Nadel

Last year was particularly memorable for me. Ever since I moved to Victoria in 1990 I wondered where all those famous Pacific Northwest mycological societies were, the ones I'd heard about during my student years in southern California and as a sweaty entomologist in Florida. Everyone knew the Northwest was full of mushrooms! I couldn't believe there was no local society where I could join in field trips, attend slide shows, and hobnob with other fungophiles. Then, last February, it happened! A primordial bud of an idea grew out of a network of several dedicated people and finally fruited. It was the first meeting of a locally based mycological society on the Island! We elected officers and were treated to a delightful inaugural presentation by Paul Kroeger of The Vancouver Mycological Society. Richard Winder and Lynn Solomon put together a solid newsletter. It was a great beginning!

In March we had a naming contest, and Adolf Ceska came up with a winner for the society (SVIMS is such a soothing acronym!), while Brenda Callan created the catchy winner for the newsletter. Field trips began, and a trickle of fungi began passing from hand to hand for identification, most of them NOT morels. The fungus eaters roamed in lean packs with hungry looks in their eyes. Summer remained quite dry, but what a fall! We had everything the rain promises, and more. The trip to Port Renfrew in September was one of the most exciting in my memory, with basketfuls of chanterelles to please the fungus eaters, and a mind-boggling array of other mushrooms to please the curious. Not all of BC was blessed with autumn rain, though; a small group of SVIMS members found themselves in thick dust during the Fall Foray at Boston Bar. The only moisture there, a veritable flood, came out of bottles! In October we had a truly impressive mushroom display for ourselves, since the public was engaged in other activities, and in November we adjourned for the winter after a convivial banquet of food and song at the Dorworth mansion.

I'm left with the satisfied feeling that everyone enjoyed themselves and learned something over the year. The monthly programs were packed with interesting information and the field trips were always a great way to spend a day. There were many reports of culinary trials, and certainly some successes. I was especially excited to see some non-scientists finally working through scientific keys to identify what they'd collected; they may not always succeed, but they can make great headway. My own repertoire of recognizable mushroom species has grown a hundredfold, and I can now begin a hobby of making an inventory of the insects that feed on them.

with as low a profile as anyone could have who harvests the extraordinary quantities I do.

From its not-so-humble beginnings in February, the society has mushroomed over the year to about 80 members, some even from Seattle and Campbell River. Finances mouldered rather than mushroomed, but nevertheless we made modest gains, mostly from the Fall Foray we hosted jointly with VMS. We held off registering as an official society, mainly because we wanted to be certain of our viability and because of the cost involved, but this year we will address the issue again.

I'm reaching the bottom of my 1994 basket, but I saved the best for last. Here nestle the memories of fine times spent with good people, and the thanks for those that volunteered their time, resources, expertise, and humour to make the new society work. Brenda arranged our monthly meetings at PFC and has been an invaluable source of useful ideas; Richard spent countless hours on the newsletter every month despite being a new father; Bruce Norris bravely lead the first field trip (and he still swears that Bamberton is good for morels!) while he and Adolf, Richard, Brenda, John Dennis, Ingeborg Woodsworth, and Joe Sehoelzel led others. Carol Harding and Berré Patenaude ensured a supply of refreshments at the monthly meetings (Carol also worked hard to train her beagles to hunt mushrooms, but the results are still iffy); Gilles Patenaude handled the finances admirably even before we had any semblance of organization; Sue Thorn took minutes and notes at the meetings - an admirable effort for a newcomer to the field of fungi; Charles and Gloria Dorworth provided their beautiful home for the-banquet; and many SVIMS members worked hard to produce an incredible mushroom display at the Royal B.C. Museum.

That sums up 1994. The presidential basket is again in my-hands, waiting for the events of 1995 to fill it with fruitful fungalities. NO doubt it won't stay empty.

UPCOMING EVENTS

2 February (Thursday)

Monthly meeting: Paul Kroeger of the Vancouver Mycological Society will continue the tradition of entertaining us as the first speaker of the year. He will present a slide show on mushroom poisons, the various kinds, and what they do. Presumably, he won't always be speaking from experience.

COMMERCIAL HUNTER'S TIPS by Constance Green

(Reprinted by popular demand from an article written for the Mycological Society of San Francisco -RSW)

For 13 years, I've been the most silent member of MSSF because, yes, I'm one of 'them'- a commercial chanterelle hunter. The pervasive condemnation of commercial hunting and periodic pirates that seek me and/or my turf have left me

My motive in hopping out of the closet is to correct a major misconception: that of the commercial hunter who has no respect for mushroom habitat. To the contrary, we who make a living with wild mushrooms have a vastly deeper commitment to preserving our mushroom beds than any weekend forager.

For many years several tracts of private land have been at my disposal. I am intimate with every tree. A profound reverence for this habitat is combined with the desire to care for the goose that lays these golden eggs. These forests now bear more chanterelles than existed in year one. As I hunt, I have two prime maintenance goals: aid spore dispersal, and maintain integrity of the 'skin' protecting the mycelium.

Here is a list of suggestions for truly caring for your own secret beds, learned by trial and error.

1. Baskets. Always use baskets, not buckets. Every bouncing step is salting spores as you walk. When you rest, place the basket on a nonbearing area under a tree drip line.

2. Soil Compaction. Apart from suicidal methods like raking, I believe soil compaction to be the biggest human danger to mushroom habitat. Ninety percent of the time in chanterelle turf, there is a deer trail paralleling the drip line. Stay on this trail! I literally tiptoe off the trail to do any picking. Any place you repeatedly walk will eventually stop bearing. You also may be tromping on young specimens yet to emerge. Compaction is especially severe when the ground is wet.

3. Picking. A: Pull and twist mushrooms from the ground. Every professional hunter has suggested this. Cutting can result in the remaining stem becoming infected and endangering the mycelium. B: Pick only what you can see above ground or obvious mushrooms. Rooting around in the leaf litter has proven to be foolish and destructive in my experience. I still think with deep regret of a single tree under which I picked 60 lb. of chanterelles. I did not "rake", but did systematically go through all the leaf litter. Twelve years later that tree is still recovering. Yields have risen slowly but are now only 10 lb. If there are baby chanterelles, you can pick them later when they are a bit larger. Chanterelles grow very slowly. If you are afraid of losing them to other hunters or livestock damage, drag branches or pile extra leaves on top. Chanterelles like snuggling under protection. C: After picking, gently pat down and recover the hole left with leaf litter or a little soil. This is very important.

4. Old Funky Specimens: Most hunters are clever enough to toss these to aid in spore dispersal. Go one step further. Pick them, break them into pieces, and directly place these pieces

under leaf litter. This hides evidence of chanterelles from other hunters, and is a more effective way to spread spores.

5. Newts: Many a chanterelle has one of these lovely creatures curled around its stem. Treat them with respect. I believe they are key players in chanterelle spore dispersal. Their viscous backs must be thick with chanterelle spores, which slough off as the newts slither through the forest mulch. Avoid stepping on them, which will also keep you aware of your footfalls and prevention of soil compaction.

6. Cleaning chanterelles: After cleaning, keep all the debris that remains in the sink screen and the bottom of your basket. Never return to the woods without inserting this debris under nonbearing but likely host trees (in our area, live oak drip lines at the edge of meadow). I'd very much like to hear from anyone who does this to compare techniques.

7. Number of hunts per habitat: Don't haunt your patches. Chanterelles grow slowly; every 3 weeks is often enough.

8. The Ideal Hunt: This is one in which you have harvested your mushrooms, yet tropped so lightly on the habitat that someone coming behind you will never know it's been hunted. As far as commercial hunting goes, the genie is far out of the bottle. Like it or not, commercial hunting is a reality that won't go away, legal or illegal. At its best, commercial hunting can give a living back to loggers and make our forests economically more valuable left standing than converted to board feet of lumber. At its worst, we have fools hunting with the short view and gun battles in the woods. I'm anxious for input from any kindred spirits, particularly responsible hunters. I can be reached at (707) 944-8604 or at 590 Wall Road, Napa, CA 94558.

MEMBER NEWS

Best wishes from SVIMS go out to Al Funk, currently recovering at home from a bacterial infection and heart surgery. Get well, Al!

Members Stephen & Caroline Ross have moved to Saskatoon, SK.

The membership lists were in a very chaotic state last year, with the startup of the Society causing enough confusion that a few people missed issues of the newsletter, etc. Hopefully, those problems will be resolved as our mechanisms for handling these things become more fixed - apologies to those who were missed! If you would like to become a member of SVIMS for 1995, please contact Hannah (604-544-1386). If you try to contact Richard, he'll just forward you to Hannah... Let's see if we can hit 100 this year. -RSW

[NB: The 1995 Cumulative Checklist originally attached to this newsletter is not included in this reproduction]

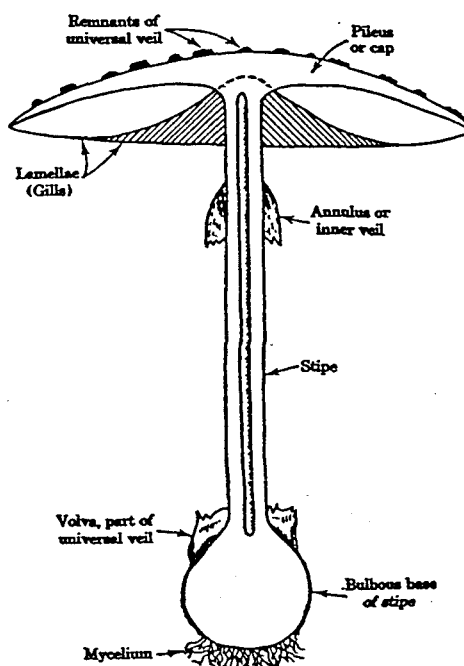


FIG. 128. Structural features of a mature fruit body of *Amanita*, in diagram.