

Next Meeting March 10th, 2008

# SPORES Afield

The newsletter of the Colorado Mycological Society

March 2008



## President's Column

**Recap of 2007:** CMS had a successful 2007. The mushrooms were bountiful and we had eight club forays. The good mushroom year led to new memberships, new faces at the meetings and some new volunteers in the club. It was a pleasure to host Michael Kuo at our 30<sup>th</sup> annual mushroom fair. The club produced the first annual mushroom calendar and it quickly sold out. Tom Ruzicka also designed and produced another original t-shirt design. Vera and a few others took an informal poll at the end of last year to see what our members wanted to hear about in 2008. The programming committee set up this year's program to reflect these suggestions and we are very excited about the speakers we were able

to bring in.

The club is only successful because of all the work our members put into it. I would like to take a moment to thank everyone who volunteered at the mushroom fair, everyone who led a mushroom foray, everyone who helped identify mushrooms, those who helped with Spores-a-Field and the CMS website, everyone who sold t-shirts, books, or calendars, and everyone who bought one of these items. I'd like to thank all the board members and committee chairs who volunteer their precious time for the continued success of the CMS.

**A Look Ahead to 2008:** We have two very exciting additions to CMS this year. First, we've added mushroom workshops before the regular meetings. Workshops will be free to CMS members and will be advertised in our newsletter. The first of these meetings will be an overview of mushroom identification, and then the rest of the meetings will focus on a particular genus or group of mushrooms.

Second, CMS has obtained a research permit from the national park service to

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## Topic for the March meeting

The speaker for March is Daniel Winkler. His talk is titled, "Mushrooms, Mountains & Monasteries, Tibet's globally unique Mushroom Economy." Daniel will present findings from his fungal research along with highlights from his most recent "MushRoaming" expedition to Tibet (see: [www.mushroaming.com](http://www.mushroaming.com)). Daniel has been traveling to Tibet for 20 years and since 1998 has been researching and tracking the local mushroom industry, an important income source for the rural people.

While Tibet is world-famous for its stunning mountain landscapes and complex ancient culture, a lesser-known activity is the economy built on the collection and trading of mushrooms. For example, the "Yartsa gunbu," or

*(continued on page 2)*

CMS has obtained a research permit from the national park service to organize a mycobltz in Rocky Mountain National Park on August 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup>.

## Order Out of Chaos

**A workshop by Marilyn Shaw**  
Come early to the March meeting if you'd like to learn ways to make mushroom identification a little easier. Marilyn Shaw will lead this session utilizing Kit Scates' "Easy Key to Common Gilled Mushrooms". Based on stature types and spore colors, this key helps you quickly zero in on the likely genus to search in your field guides in order to make an identification. The session will start at 6:30 PM in Mitchell Hall. Bring your key if you have one. If not, they will be available at the meeting.

## Upcoming Events

### March 10<sup>th</sup> -

6:30 PM - Mini-Class - Marilyn Shaw - 'Order Out of Chaos: Using the Easy Key to Common Gilled Mushrooms'. More info on page 1.

7:30 PM - Daniel Winkler "Mushrooms, Mountains & Monasteries - Tibet's globally unique Mushroom Economy"

### April 14<sup>th</sup> -

7:30 PM - Beatrix Potter  
Hope Miller will be speaking about one of the most famous women mycologists of all time.

### May 12<sup>th</sup> -

7:30 PM - Trees of Colorado  
Dina Clark, botanist and curator of vascular plants at the Denver Botanic Gardens, will help us learn to identify those Colorado trees which constitute the habitat for so many of the mushrooms we love to hunt.

### June 9<sup>th</sup> -

7:30 PM - Myco-restoration  
CMS member Marc Donsky will discuss the use of fungi to help repair or restore ecologically harmed habitats.

### July 14<sup>th</sup> -

7:30 PM - CMS member Ed Lubow - "Tricholomas"

### August 17<sup>th</sup> -

Annual CMS Mushroom Fair at Denver Botanic Gardens. The Fair identifier this year is Else Vellinga.

### August 18<sup>th</sup> -

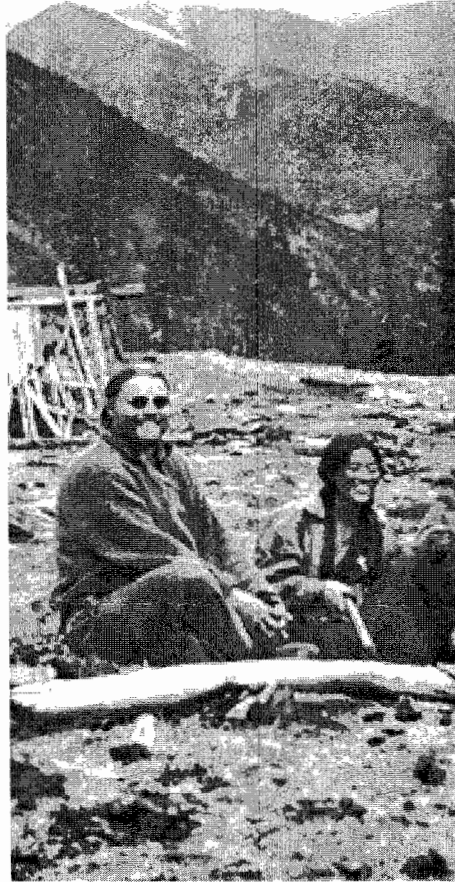
7:30 PM - Else Vellinga

### September 8<sup>th</sup> -

7:30 PM - Cook & Taste - A 10-minute introduction will be given by Rob Hallock on the mushrooms we will be eating.

### October 13<sup>th</sup> -

7:30 PM - Dr. Roberto Garibay - "Ethnomycology"



Daniel Winkler in Tibet

(*March continued from page 1*)

caterpillar fungus *Cordyceps sinensis*, a precious ingredient in traditional Chinese medicine, is rural Tibet's most important "cash crop." Each spring, Tibetans comb alpine grasslands for this fungus, while forests are searched for "gugu shamo," the "cuckoo mushroom" (morels). In summer, "beshing shamo," *Tricholoma matsutake* are collected and flown to Japan. Many other mushrooms are also collected for markets, including *Amanita hemibapha*, *Hygrophorus russula*, *Rozites emodensis*, many boletes (including *Boletus* and *Leccinum* species), *Cantharellus*, and several species of *Sarcodon* and *Tricholoma*.

Daniel Winkler, trained as a geographer and ecologist, works as researcher and non-governmental organization consultant on environmental issues of the Tibetan Plateau and Himalayas. He has published on forest ecology, forestry, land-use, medicinal plants and fungi [see [www.danielwinkler.com](http://www.danielwinkler.com)]. Since 1998, Daniel has been tracking yartsa gunbu (caterpillar fungus - *Cordyceps sinensis*) as well as researching Tibet's mushroom industry and its importance for rural people. Daniel is also leading "MushRoaming" tours to Tibet [[www.mushroaming.com](http://www.mushroaming.com)]. He lives in Kirkland, WA and has been a member of the Puget Sound Mycological Society since 1996.

## Monthly Meetings

CMS meetings provide an informal opportunity to socialize and exchange information with others interested in mycology. Meetings are usually held the second Monday night of each month, from March through October, at 7:30 pm at the Denver Botanic Gardens, 1005 York Street, Denver, CO. The meetings are held in Mitchell Hall. There is no charge to get into the Botanic Gardens to attend the meetings. Members and visitors are welcome.

Bring mushrooms for identification and display to any meeting.

All meetings are held at the Denver Botanic Gardens in Mitchell Hall at 7:30 pm unless otherwise announced.

## Membership Dues are Due

If you have not paid your CMS dues for 2008, please pay as soon as possible. If you are not sure if you have already paid, check your membership expiration date in the upper right corner of the mailing label of this issue. If you have any questions as to the accuracy of the expiration date on the label, change of address or to renew your membership, send a check for \$25 or a note to:

Linda deLeon  
14310 W. Fifth Ave.  
Golden, CO 80401-5226  
ldeleon@comcast.net  
303-278-9582

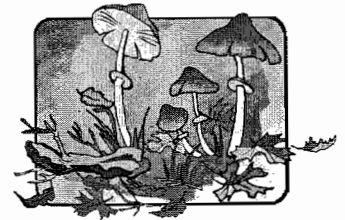
(Please note: New memberships are \$28)

*(President continued from page 1)*

organize a mycoblitz in Rocky Mountain National Park (RMNP) on August 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup>. A mycoblitz is when a group of people get together for a short period of time and focus on identifying the mushrooms in a given area. This is a very exciting opportunity for CMS. We all know that collecting mushrooms in National Parks is illegal, and this is our one opportunity to collect in the park. Additionally, mushrooms have not been systematically studied in RMNP. Our efforts will be the first to document fungi in the park. This event has great potential but will only be successful with ample help from club members. Next month's column will be devoted to the mycoblitz, so please save the dates and stay tuned for more details. This event has great potential but will only be successful with ample help from club

members. Next month's column will be devoted to the mycoblitz, so please save the dates and stay tuned for more details.

I hope to see you at the meetings, workshops, and on the forays. Let's hope for adequate moisture and another bountiful mushroom year. ☺



**"Eating mushrooms is like falling in love; you never know if it's the real thing until it's too late." - Bill Balance, radio host**

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## What lies beneath: a new mushroom

By Paul Fattig  
Mail Tribune  
Medford, OR  
November 20, 2007

SHADY COVE — Hydrologist Robert Coffan knew he was looking at something very unusual in the knee-deep summer waters of the upper Rogue River.

Here were gilled mushrooms, swaying in the main current of the clear, cold river in early July through late September.

"But since gilled mushrooms DO NOT live and grow underwater, I was real nervous" about approaching a mycological expert, admitted the adjunct professor at Southern Oregon University.

Indeed, Darlene Southworth, a retired SOU biology professor, was plenty skeptical when he broached the subject. Although she was impressed by underwater photographs taken by Coffan, she wanted to see the evidence firsthand.

Not only did she witness the mushrooms found by Coffan, but she discovered others during an August

visit to a stretch of the north fork of the river within a few miles of Woodruff Bridge in the Rogue River-Siskiyou National Forest.

"There are no known gilled mushrooms living underwater," Southworth explained. "And this is not a slime mold or anything like that. These are regular gilled mushrooms.

"We believe this is a new species," she concluded of the mushrooms that are typically about 10 centimeters tall with caps that are about 2 centimeters wide.

The find was unveiled Monday night at the November meeting of the Upper Rogue Watershed Association, for whom Coffan had prepared a water assessment last year.

Dubbed *Psathyrella aquatic*, the mushroom is being introduced to the broader scientific community in a 14-page paper submitted Nov. 9 to the science journal *Mycologia*. The paper was written by Coffan in collaboration with Southworth and Jonathan Frank, a laboratory technician at SOU.

Coffan credits Southworth, who now conducts research under a National Science Foundation grant at the university, for focusing on mycorrhizal fungi, and Frank for the paper and much of the research in determining the mushroom's uniqueness.

Up at Oregon State University, Matt Trappe, a doctoral candidate in forest mycology, says Coffan has found a unique mushroom. He and his father, Jim Trappe, a retired U.S. Forest Service mycologist who now teaches in OSU's botany and plant pathology department, were consulted on the find.

"As far as we've determined, this is a first in Oregon as well as a first in the world," Matt Trappe said of gilled

mushrooms living in water. "We're not aware of anything at all like this in mycology where the reproductive mushroom structure appears to be perennially underwater.

"If this evolved in Oregon, what are the odds it can be found in streams and rivers around the world?" he asked. "This raises all kinds of questions about spore disbursement and evolution."

There are more questions than answers at this point, acknowledged Coffan, who originally discovered the water-dwelling gilled mushrooms in summer 2005. None of the mushrooms were found in slack water, he noted.

Here were gilled mushrooms, swaying in the main current of the clear, cold river in early July through late September.

A DNA analysis at SOU's Bio Tech Center and a cross-check of references and experts, including mycologists at the University of Minnesota, determined the mushrooms belonged to the genus *Psathyrella*, Southworth said. Samples were sent to OSU and to San Francisco State University.

There are about 600 known species of *Psathyrella*, all terrestrial, she said.

"How do we identify them? We look at the morphology — the form, the shape and the DNA," she said.

It has a small bell-shaped cap, a thin stipe (stem) and gills underneath, she said. They examined the cells in the cap and made a spore print.

Researchers have ruled out the possibility the mushrooms were growing along the banks and were merely submerged by rising waters brought on by snowmelt.

The mushrooms were found in the spring-fed "base" flow of the river, Coffan said, noting that flow is consistent and keeps the mushrooms

submerged.

The mushrooms tend to grow on submerged wood but can also be found growing in the gravel, Southworth said.

"These are growing in the same place for three months," she said, adding they have been found as late as Sept. 21.

Although there are some known freshwater aquatic fungi, this is the only known gilled mushroom that grows underwater, she reiterated.

"We noticed there is a gas bubble underwater," she said. "When we pulled the mushroom out, we could hold it up for some seconds before the spore burst. But they would not be uniformly distributed. They would stick to the cap, to the stipe, to Jonathan's fingers."

They don't know what the gas is, she noted.

They are also intrigued by its three-month fruiting season.

"That's way long for mushrooms," she observed.

As for their edibility, Southworth figures the waterborne mushrooms are too small to warrant collecting for food.

However, several of the terrestrial *Psathyrella* are edible, although most have never been tested as a food source, according to her research.

"There is no reason it would go toxic," she observed of a member of the genus growing in water.

Meanwhile, Coffan, Southworth and Frank plan to return to the area to conduct further research to try to determine the extent of the mushroom's habitat. They also want to check out other streams in the region for evidence of the mushrooms.

But it will be next summer before that is feasible," she said. "Right now we can describe this one river: It's aerated,

cold, clear, steady flow. But we want to find out how the spores are dispersed."

"And we want to find out how unique the habitat is," Coffan said. "We have a whole new area to look for mushrooms now. It's mind-boggling."

Reach reporter Paul Fattig at 776-4496 or e-mail him at pfattig@mailtribune.com.

## Genetic technology reveals how poisonous mushrooms cook up toxins

Nov. 12, 2007

EAST LANSING, Mich. — Heather Hallen spent eight years looking for poison in all the wrong places.

Alpha-amanitin is the poison of the death cap mushroom, *Amanita phalloides*. The Michigan State University plant biology research associate was looking for a big gene that makes a big enzyme that produces alpha-amanitin, since that's how other fungi produce similar compounds. But after years of defeat, she and her team called in the big guns — new technology that sequences DNA about as fast as a death cap mushroom can kill.

The results: The discovery of remarkably small genes that produce the toxin — a unique pathway previously unknown in fungi.

The discovery is reported in today's Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences. It is work that not only solves a mystery of how some mushrooms make the toxin — but also sheds light on the underlying biochemical machinery. It might be possible one day to harness the mushroom genes to make novel chemicals that would be useful as new drugs.

"We think we have a factory that spits

out lots of little sequences to make chemicals in *Amanita* mushrooms," said Jonathan Walton, MSU plant biology professor who leads Hallen's team. "Our work indicates that these mushrooms have evolved a mechanism to make dozens or even hundreds of new, previously unknown chemicals, besides the toxins that we know about."

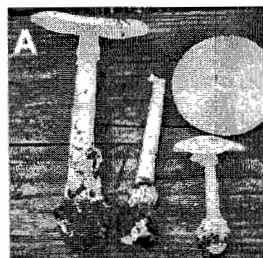
Of the thousands of species of mushrooms, only about 30 produce alpha-amanitin. Most of them look much like their edible cousins. But poisonous mushrooms are powerful in folklore and in history. In 54 A.D., Emperor Tiberius Claudius was fed a death cap mushroom by his wife Agrippina to put her son Nero on the throne of Rome.

Alpha-amanitin kills people by inhibiting an enzyme necessary for expression of most genes. Without the ability to synthesize new proteins, cells quickly grind to a halt. The intestinal tract and the liver are the hardest hit as they come into first contact with the toxin. By the time symptoms show up, a liver transplant is often the only hope.

Hallen, a mycologist, gathers mushrooms in the Michigan woods and often is called upon to help identify mushroom species for veterinarians, parents of small children and local hospitals — often in a desperate race to beat alpha-amanitin's effects.

Walton's lab works to understand the biochemical pathways by which natural products are synthesized in fungi. Fungal natural products that benefit human health include penicillin and the immunosuppressant drug cyclosporin. Studying their biosynthesis could lead to the discovery and development of new medicines.

For more information go to <http://www.newsroom.msu.edu/site/indexer/3244/content.htm>



# The 2007 Crested Butte Wild Mushroom Festival

Roger Kahn



The 2007 Crested Butte Wild Mushroom Festival was an overwhelming success again last year, exceeding the expectations of the Festival organizers. Over 175 people attended and among them, spread out over 3 separate forays and identification sessions in as many days, they found more than 180 varieties of mushrooms, more than ever before!

We had additional expert help identifying the collected mushrooms this year thanks to Rob Hallock, Ed Lubow, and Jon Sommer, all of the Colorado Mycological Society. They made our i.d. process more efficient, and more fun.

This year there were also new forays: one for children aged 6-13; one focused on photography; and one conducted on especially easy terrain for those who have trouble with the high altitude.

In addition to the forays, participants heard Dr. Michael Kuo give separate workshops on Morels and Boletus and David "Dr. Dave" Teitler who gave another workshop on Medicinal Uses of Mushrooms.

The Crested Butte restaurateurs that did the Cooking with Wild Mushrooms workshop/luncheons outdid themselves this year and several participants had so much fun, they decided to forgo some of the afternoon's scheduled activities.

As in previous years, as is unique to the CB Wild Mushroom Festival, following a wild mushroom appetizers and fine wine event, attendees were treated to an outstanding jazz concert that this year featured the nationally acclaimed jazz vocalist, Rene Marie. This coming year the Crested Butte Wild Mushroom Festival will be held from August 16-19, 2008. Given the massive amounts of snowfall and the resultant snowpack Crested Butte is receiving, the CB Festival organizers anticipate a record breaking Festival this coming year and are organizing for it now. As soon as the program is finalized, they will let you know. Or, periodically, go to [www.cbmushfest.com](http://www.cbmushfest.com) for information and early registration.

See you in August in Crested Butte.

## Welcome to CMS!

This is the first issue for 2008 of *SporesAfield*, the newsletter of the Colorado Mycological Society. The purpose of this newsletter is to provide a forum for members to share experiences, information, and insight on mushrooms of Colorado and the Rocky Mountains.

The Colorado Mycological Society is a nonprofit corporation established in 1967 to advance the understanding of, and to stimulate interest in, the field of mycology. Our members collect specimens for identification, preservation and study. CMS is affiliated with the North American Mycological Association (NAMA). CMS provides consulting services to the Denver Botanic Gardens and the Rocky Mountain Poison and Drug Center.



I'm terrifically sad to have missed a screening of the 2006 Irish film *Shrooms* by the Denver Film Society, however I have added it to my Netflix Queue. It's rated a whopping 2 ½ stars (4.8/10 on IMDb) so I'm pretty sure I'll be impressed. I've included the marketing blurb in the event any of you are interested in coming over to my place to watch what promises to be the film highlight of the year! How bad can it be, really? I'll make nachos.

- Gretchen Cheverton

## Shrooms

Ireland, 2006, 84 Minute Running Time  
Genre/Subjects: Comedy, Foreign, Horror  
Language: English

Having been promised the 'trip' of a lifetime by their Irish friend and mushroom expert Jake, a group of American teenagers arrives in Ireland, keen for adventure. Despite Jake's warnings about the 'shrooms they shouldn't eat, things start to go horribly wrong and the teenagers suffer horrific visions. The panicked friends are attacked by ghostly creatures, never sure whether they are experiencing gruesome reality or startling hallucinations. As the group is bloodily whittled down to one, it is soon clear that, whether or not these apparitions are real, the carnage they leave behind certainly is.



Mary Ann Guthrie  
Le Cordon Bleu Certified, Paris

## Fruits of the Foray Mushroom Recipes for Good Dining

Spring is when we eagerly anticipate the finding of morels.

The following recipe is submitted by one of our favorite members, Bill Windsor.

### Colorado Black Morels

#### *Aorchella elata*

Black Morels are one of the most sought after fungi for the dinner table and have a long tradition in haute cuisine. In Colorado, black morels rarely fruit in big numbers, however because of the varied elevations of Colorado's topography, their fruiting 'season' is extended as they emerge at higher and higher elevations in the early spring.

Morels are one of a few mushrooms that reconstitute very well after drying and in fact, drying the mushroom concentrates their flavor. Dried morels produce tastier sauces while fresh morels have a firmer body and are best served quick sautéed in high heat. Due to the morel's sponge-like flesh they are excellent in, or covered by, sauces. The flavor of a black morel has strong tones of beef, mushroom and nuts. Because of this they are best served with meats or as a substitute for meat. Morels should always be thoroughly cooked as they contain small amounts of a toxic

volatile oil. Drying reduces the oils, but it takes heat to eliminate them.

Depending on the intended use, dried black morels should be re-hydrated in either chicken stock or milk. If you are using morels to compliment pork or veal then re-hydrate the morels in chicken stock. If you are serving morels with beef, buffalo, lamb or as a substitute for beef, then re-hydrate the morels with milk. If you intend to serve the morels in a cream sauce, then soak them in half & half or table cream. Soak the morels in the stock in the refrigerator for about one hour. Stir every 15 minutes as the morels will float and stirring also dislodges any soil or sand attached to the morel. Gently squeeze the morels as you remove them from the soaking liquid. If making a cream sauce, save the soaking liquid for the sauce. Gently pour off the majority of the liquid but leave the last ounce behind as soil and other contaminants will sink to the bottom of the soaking liquid.

### Morel Cream Sauce

Sauté the morels in butter and add a little salt using medium high heat. Lightly brown the morels. Add a tablespoon or two of cooking sherry and continue cooking until the sherry is wholly absorbed by the morels and no liquid remains. Add the half & half soaking liquid and add another pint of half & half or table cream. Reduce the heat to a high simmer (not boiling) and cook down until the liquid thickens, about 30 minutes. Do not season the sauce until after it has been reduced. If serving with lamb (or poached eggs), add fresh tarragon leaves to the sauce mid-way through the reduction, other wise just salt and light pepper to taste.

### Morel Red-Wine Reduction Butter

Sauté the morels as above and set aside. Lightly brown finely chopped shallots. Add a cup of red wine and cook down until the wine is nearly completely evaporated. While the wine

sauce is reducing, enjoy a glass of red wine or two, although don't become 'sauced'. Next, add 1/3rd of the morels and two sticks of butter. Cook for 30 minutes on very low heat and stirring often. Do not cook away the butter solids. Remove from heat and allow the butter to slightly harden at room temperature. Stir occasionally as the butter solidifies. Re-heat the remaining morels while cooking the meat. Cover the meat with a generous amount of the reduction butter and then place the remaining morels on top of the butter.

### Roasted Asparagus and Wild Mushrooms

Serves 6

- 4 TB organic extra virgin olive oil, divided
- 1 lb assorted fresh wild mushrooms sliced
- 3 cloves organic garlic, minced
- 1 TB freshly squeezed organic lemon juice
- 1 TB minced fresh organic Italian parsley
- 1 1/2 lb medium thick organic asparagus, tough ends trimmed
- 1/4 tsp sea salt
- 1/8 tsp freshly ground black pepper

Preheat the oven to 475°F. Heat 3 tablespoons of olive oil in a large sauté pan over medium-high heat. Add the mushrooms and garlic, sauté until the mushrooms are brown and just tender, 8 to 10 minutes. Remove the pan from the heat. Add the lemon juice and parsley, toss to coat. Set aside. Arrange the asparagus on a rimmed baking sheet. Drizzle with remaining 1 tablespoon olive oil. Sprinkle with salt and pepper. Toss to coat. Roast the asparagus until just tender, about 10 minutes. Arrange the asparagus on a serving platter and top with the wild mushroom mixture.

**Information in this Column was provided by CMS members or stolen from the very best cookbooks! The Colorado Mycological Society is not responsible for errors in judgment of those collecting wild mushrooms.**

## Other Society Activities

### Forays:

When the mushroom season gets going, mushroom forays are led by experienced members of CMS to different locations around the state. We usually hold forays on Saturday and Sunday. *These forays are limited to members only.* Forays are probably the best way to learn to recognize different kinds of mushrooms.

### Mushroom Fair:

A mushroom fair is held each year in August at the Denver Botanic Gardens. August is the height of the mushroom season in Colorado, and members from around the state bring in a large variety of mushrooms for identification and display. The fair is open to the general public on Sunday. It is a great time to learn about mushrooms!

*Spores Afield*

## Resources:

### CMS Library

CMS offers free use of the mycology reference library to CMS members. Please contact Jeffrey Dann at 303-449-9395 to check out a book or to find out more about the collection.

### Books For Sale

We also offer a variety of books for sale at each meeting. The books are usually available to members at a discount.

### CMS Web site

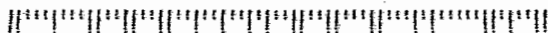
CMS is on the World Wide Web at: <http://www.cmsweb.org>. The web site is full of information on the society's events, forays, and links to other sites in an easy to use format.

## SporesAfield

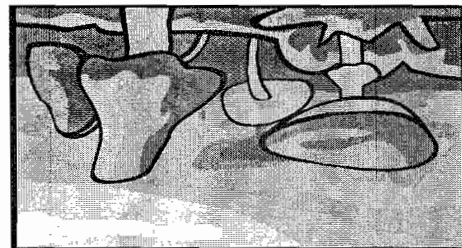
*SporesAfield* is published from March through October by the Colorado Mycological Society. CMS dues are \$28 for the first year and \$25 thereafter. Send membership dues to Linda deLeon, CMS Membership Chair, 14310 W. Fifth Ave. Golden, CO 80401-5226. All CMS members receive *SporesAfield* as part of their membership.

CMS is an affiliated member of the North American Mycological Association.

CMS web site: [www.cmsweb.org](http://www.cmsweb.org)



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