

Next Meeting May 12, 2003

SPORES Afield

The newsletter of the Colorado Mycological Society

May 2003

The Mystique of Morels

By Ellen Jacobson

Did you ever wonder why whole books have been written about morels? We know they are delicious, we know they are beloved, but so is *Boletus edulis* and no books have appeared devoted entirely to these summer favorites; they are, however, much easier to find and perhaps therein lies the answer to our question. There is a fine mystique associated with morels, they are beautiful, often infrequent, and hide so well from our too human eyes. We can walk right by them and they go unnoticed, an event I can never imagine happening with the large, gaudy and robust Porcini.

And when the Boleys bloom or don't, there are always plenty of other fungi around---when the morels come out, that's about all that's out and, except for some oysters, we are likely to come home empty handed during much of the short morel season.

The first challenge in morel hunting is to find the correct habitat, the second is to use your 'small eyes' to pick them out from their well-camouflaged hiding places and the third, and hardest, is to be in the right place at the right time. Since the right place at the right time is only approximate, finding the little buggers tends to put a lot of miles on your car and your feet.

Habitat is a very visual thing and even if you are in the proper place, if the mushrooms aren't, the habitat may not imprint correctly. At this
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Speaker for the May Meeting: Marilyn Shaw

Title: "Why people eat (the wrong) mushrooms"

The general public, most of them unreconstructed mycophobes, when hearing of an illness caused by mushrooms, invariably ask, "Why would anyone eat that? We mycophiles would more likely ask, "Why would anyone eat a mushroom that would make them sick?" Obviously, most people do not intend to do so. But still it happens. Why? Over a period of twenty years Marilyn Shaw has seen a surprising variety of reasons, some of them perfectly rational, some not. During the May program she will introduce the audience to a few of the many ways people find to get into trouble with mushrooms in an attempt to keep others from making the same mistakes.

Marilyn and her late husband, Stuart, first became interested in fungi in 1963 when mushrooms popped up literally everywhere around their mountain cabin west of Nederland. They purchased a couple of books (there weren't many field guides available then) and thought they were ready for the next time this phenomenon occurred. They soon learned this was not an easy pursuit to undertake independently. Eventually, Stuart learned of the mycological society and suggested, "If you are going to feed us mushrooms, you had better join this club." They both took an identification class and joined CMS in 1973. Stuart, with his talents in writing and editing soon was recruited to edit *Spores Afield*.
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Upcoming Events

- Late May** Plans for another morel mushroom foray are being made. This time we will be looking for black morels in a burn area. Please contact our Vice President William Windsor (contact information this page) if you are interested. Subject to change.
- May 12th** Marilyn Shaw,
"Why people eat (the wrong) mushrooms"
- June 9th** Dr. Michael Beug
"The beautiful Coral mushrooms from Ecology to Gastronomy"
- July 14th** Dr. Rick Kerrigan
"The genus Agaricus: Fascinating conundrum or royal pain"
- Aug. 16th** Fair Setup
- Aug. 17th** Annual CMS Mushroom Fair at Denver Botanic Gardens
- Aug. 18th** Dr. Orson Miller,
Subject to be announced
- Aug. 21-24th** Telluride Mushroom Festival
- Sept. 8th** To be announced
- Oct. 13th** To be announced

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

Oyster mushrooms are out in force.

Editors note

Easter weekend I spent some time looking for morels with my wife Karen and William Windsor to no avail. We did however find quite a few oyster mushrooms *Pleurotus ostreatus* on cottonwood stumps and one large cluster on willow.

A "CELEBRATION OF LIFE" honoring our late dear friend and fellow CMS member, Jeanette Conner Taylor. Jeanette's son, Vic, has issued an invitation to gather at the Historical Society of Colorado plaza, 1300 Broadway at 10 AM on Monday, May 12, 2003, for a brief remembrance. If desired, memorial contributions may be made to the Colorado Historical Society c/o the Development Office, 1300 Broadway, Denver, CO 80203-2167.

Light refreshments will be served. One hour on-street parking is available.

Submitted by Marilyn Shaw

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CMS Website

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Spores Afield

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

CMS website: <http://www.cmsweb.org>

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point, you need to go on a foray or find a very good friend who will share a secret spot with you. My mushroom friend, Kris Philbin, has the uncanny ability to recognize habitat and will often say, "They aren't here today, but someday they will be." She will return again and again and eventually, the morels will show up. This holds true for most mushrooms, so when you attend a foray, concentrate on your surroundings and the mushrooms will follow.

Morel Story #1. My brother, Jim, who can see a black, thumb-sized black morel at 20 feet, gives his famous hot and cold lessons to neophytes. He requires that his students crawl around on the ground while he yells hot or cold as one approaches or retreats from the goal; eventually even the most morelly challenged see the prize, pick the treasure, and everyone goes home happy.

Morel Story #2. I was driving to Omaha several years ago and decided to check the Platte in the vicinity of Gothenburg, Nebraska. I pulled off the Interstate, headed a little south, found a dirt road, got out of the car and within 10" I picked six, yes, six ½ pound Golden morels. "Wow", I thought, "This is a piece of cake. By the time I get to Omaha, I'll have a car full".

Well, 350 miles and five stops later I still had only six morels. But I had been chased by farm dogs, peered at by the local Police, waded through poison ivy, and gotten the car stuck in the mud. No one had preceded me and that is the mystique of morels.

(Speaker continued from page 1)

Prior to 1973, Dr. D.H. (Sam) Mitchel, a practicing internist and founder of CMS, was instrumental in creating an organized approach to the handling of mushroom poisonings. A booklet on the subject was then published by CMS. In 1974 Dr. Barry Rumack, director of the Rocky Mountain Poison Center, and Dr. Emanuel Salzman, a radiologist at Beth Israel Hospital, along with several members of CMS, organized the Aspen Mushroom Conference which was co-sponsored by CMS, RMPC, and Beth Israel Hospital. The conference was aimed at the medical community, especially emergency room personnel. A couple of years later, Marilyn, Stuart, and 14 year old son, Ben were asked to assist at the conference, Stuart as official photographer. Marilyn and Ben assisted Linnea Gillman with the microscope class, keeping just one step ahead of those taking the class. Marilyn sat in on the toxicology lectures and found the subject fascinating. Staff included some of the top names in mycology and toxicology. After participating in the conference for three years, Marilyn gained the courage to start helping with calls from the poison center.

The North American Mycological Association's toxicology committee created the Mushroom Poisoning Case Registry in 1983, and Marilyn was asked to join the committee. She has served on it since then. She has been the primary mycology consultant to the RMPC (now RMPDC) since about that time, and has written and lectured extensively on the subject of mushroom toxicology.

Mycology on the Internet

By Ed Lubow

botit.botany.wisc.edu/toms_fungi

This month we're going to take a look at Dr. Tom Volk's pages. Dr. Volk is a Professor in the Department of Biology at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse. He teaches courses on General Mycology, Medical Mycology, Plant-Microbe Interactions, Latin and Greek for Scientists, as well as parts of Plant Biology. He's been adding to his collection of pages for seven years, and has recently managed to have received an e-mail from all seven continents (including Antarctica!) by people who have viewed his pages.

The main reason for going to his page is to check out his Fungus of the Month. He's been producing these since January, 1997, when it was *Tuber gibbosum*, the Oregon white truffle.

For the current month (as I write this), it's a Mycological Easter Egg Hunt, his 76th Fungus of the Month. This one features a collage of photographs of various egg-like fungi. Each, when clicked on, will take you to another page with more detailed information on the fungus in the photo.

While most of them focus on a single species, he also puts out pages which are more seasonal. The current Fungus of the Month is one such. He also has Fungi that are necessary for a Merry Christmas and Fungal Diseases which must be overcome to have a traditional Thanksgiving Dinner.

For those who might not have any idea how to pronounce a name like *Hohenbuehelia petaloides*, he also has, on each page, a sound link which will play a recording of Dr. Volk pronouncing the name the way he thinks it should be.

Unlike many mycology web pages, these fall into the fun category. There are not detailed descriptions, and you will probably not learn to identify these mushrooms from them. But if you'd like to see a bit lighter way to present mycology, pay his place a visit. Any web page featuring a puffball-man on the main page instead of a snowman has got to be OK.

Spores Afield

"*Amanita phalloides* poisoning in Altadena"

Printed with permission from Nathan Wilson, Burbank, California, member of the Los Angeles Mycological Society, with appreciation to CMS members, Joanna and Bernie Seward for forwarding the information to me. Marilyn Shaw, CMS Toxicology chair. (Note: *Amanita phalloides* is not known to occur in Colorado.)

"Last weekend I got a call from the Huntington Hospital about a possible mushroom poisoning. They had a patient with severe liver failure who had eaten a mushroom collected under an oak tree in a garden in Altadena. It was identified as an edible by the collector based on mushrooms he had seen in Mexico. One of his relatives brought over a specimen and I verified that it is the Death Cap, *Amanita phalloides*.

I have seen unprecedented numbers of *Amanita phalloides* in the LA area this year - at least five collections I'm aware of. It appears that this mushroom is becoming more common in our area as it has over the last few decades in northern California.

Yesterday I got a call from one of the doctors involved in the case (who) told me a (of a) couple of developments in the case. First, the patient is doing slightly better than last week. Some liver functioning has returned, but currently his kidneys are not working. Apparently this is common with liver failure. If the liver recovers then there is a good chance his kidneys will recover and his prospects for a full recovery are quite good. However, there is still a very big chance that his liver will fail completely and he will need a liver transplant.

The family has reached out to their community and in a few days has managed to raise most of the money needed to fund the transplant (well in excess of \$100,000). One of my hopes is that we can get the word out through this community (Los Angeles) about deadly mushrooms. I am planning on getting in touch with the San Francisco group which has a poster specifically designed for this purpose."

Mushrooms, Guns and Hand Grenades

By William Windsor

It seems like I am always finding 'stuff' when I go out to foray for mushrooms. I have found knives, flashlights, a compass, a harmonica and more. While bountiful finds of mushrooms can make a foray rewarding, it is often the unexpected finds and chance encounters that make a foray memorable. What follows are three very short stories about forays that turned out to be just a little 'different' due to items found and people encountered.

Mushrooms

Last spring, I was ambling along a stretch of Boulder Creek when a young man of the rainbow clan approached me. "Duuuude!" the young man called out, "I know what your doing here." I looked up from the forest floor and couldn't help but smile at the sight of this guy. He was flash-back to the late 1960's, with just a touch of punk to link him to the present. "This is a great spot to get high. Here, lets light up!" he said as he passed me a fat joint. "Ganja Time!"

"No, no," I responded, "I'm looking for mushrooms." The young man eyed me carefully, shrugged his shoulders and with an expression of regret stated, "I ain't got no 'schrooms dude." "No, no," I repeated, "I'm looking along the creek for mushrooms to eat." The expression of his face instantly changed to joy. "You can find 'schrooms in Boulder?!" he asked incredulously. "That's soooo cool! Lets go find some!" At this point I had to take the time to explain to him the type of mushrooms I was seeking and to inform him that the type of mushrooms he was interested in did not grow in Colorado. The young man sat down on a tree stump and lit up the joint. He wished me good luck and then placed an offering of ganja into my shirt pocket. Giving me a knowing wink, his parting words were "Come back here if you find any schrooms, dude, 'kay?"

Guns

During a summer foray in the mountains of Arizona, I was searching for Chanterelles when I spotted a metal box half buried in the ground. It looked like a military style box and my guess was that the box had been buried, and a bear had dug it up. "Oh, wow! Buried treasure!" I thought to myself.

I pulled the box from the ground, and checking to see if I was being watched, opened the box and found an impressive stash of guns and ammunition. I tried to figure out why someone would bury a cache of guns and came to the paranoid conclusion that it belonged to a murderer who was trying to hide the evidence. I quickly placed the box back into the hole and stopping just long enough to remember key features of the area, I hiked back to my car and drove to the nearest phone to call the police. The dispatcher on the phone asked me to meet an officer and show him the location of the guns.

Two officers arrived in a short while and as I lead them out to the box they started to ask me questions. A lot of questions. And not about the guns I found, but about myself and what I was doing in the woods. "There aren't any trails here, what were you doing in the woods?" asked officer one. "I was hunting mushrooms" I replied honestly. "Mushrooms?" asked officer two. "Yes," I replied, "I was looking for Chanterelles". "What's your full name?" "Can I see your Driver's License?" "Where do you live" "You say you were looking for mushrooms?" "Do you have any weapons on you now?" came in rapid succession from the officers, while officer one wrote notes in a small note pad. I had the distinct impression that I was under suspicion. Unfortunately, that is not an uncommon reaction when a mycologist expresses enthusiasm about fruiting fungi. The fact that I had hair down to the middle of my back and a large bushy beard may also have contributed to their impression that I was a person who warranted suspicion.

At last we came to where I found the box. I started to pull it from the ground when one of the
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officers stopped me saying "Step...away...from...the...box." Now just hearing those words sent a chill down my spine. I expected to see the officers with their guns drawn. I think I watch WAY too much TV. "Its for your own safety sir" officer one said, perhaps realizing that he had just scared the hell out of me.

Officer two finished pulling the box from the ground and then looked at me and asked, "You say you opened the box?" "Yeah," I responded, "It has a couple of guns in it and a lot of bullets." "Probably not booby-trapped then" said officer two. They both turned to look at me. "I didn't think of that" I said meekly. "You could have been hurt sir, maybe loose your hands" officer one informs me. They take the box without opening it and as we return to our cars officer one explains their concern. They told me about a militia group that has been storing guns and ammunition on the mountain for the past few years. When we arrive at our cars and officer one has two more questions. "What kind of mushrooms did you say you were looking for?" and pulling out his note pad "Can you spell that?"

Hand Grenade

I am usually not surprised to find just about any object in the woods, but when that object turns out to be a hand grenade, well it sort of captures your attention. I was collecting boletes in an area that appeared to be very pristine forest when I found the grenade. It was just lying on the forest floor. Now I know that I am not exactly a brilliant person, but I am ashamed to report that this incident had the potential to earn me a Darwin Award.

For those who have not read about Darwin Awards, they are issued posthumously to those who died performing feats of great stupidity. The award honors the fact that the deceased will not contribute to the human gene pool. My own potential nomination for the award occurred when I picked up the hand grenade and examined it. It was heavy and it sure looked real. Then I spotted a small hole in the bottom of grenade. It looked

like the grenade was filled with dirt. Hey, it still had the pin in the handle! I have watched enough action movies to know that as long as you hold the handle, its safe to pull the pin out of a hand grenade. Besides, it was just a hollow dirt bomb grenade, so I grabbed the handle and pulled the pin out.

For some reason, at this point my brain actually engaged and sent a message to my impulse control center. The two parts of my mind had a conversation that went something like this: Brain - "Why did you just pull that pin out?" Impulse - "Look at me, man, I'm John frigging Wayne! ...besides, its not a REAL grenade." Brain - "Have you ever seen a real grenade? Impulse - "Noooo, but look! its got a hole in the bottom." Brain - "Maybe ALL hand grenades have a hole in the bottom." Impulse - "YIKES! What do we do now?!!!" Brain - "Promise that from now on, you will not do things like that without consulting me first"

I replaced the pin into the handle and with my free hand I picked up a stick and working the dirt loose, inserted the stick into the hole and probed around. YES! The grenade really was hollow. Still, I held my breath before letting go of the handle, and a long moment passed and before I allowed myself to breath.

Needed:

Authors, Artists, and Poets

The editor of *Spores Afield* needs your help. Please consider submitting an article, line drawing, digital photographs, a poem, editorial, comic, report on mushroom sightings, news items, announcements on upcoming events, or any other contributions to your newsletter. This is your chance to share with your fellow members.

Send articles, original artwork, or other items to:

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The Telluride Mushroom Festival

August 21-24, 2003

Highlights: Mushroom Feast, Forays, Workshops, and "Shroom Parade"

The annual Telluride Mushroom Festival—designed for people interested in edible, psychoactive, and poisonous mushrooms—will be held in Telluride, Colorado, Aug. 21-24.

The festival includes mushroom lectures, forays, hands-on identification and cultivation workshops, mushroom poetry, and a mushroom parade—which runs down the main street of Telluride and features festival participants dressed as mushrooms, spores, and other elements of the mycological world.

This year marks the debut of the Festival's mushroom "Cook-off Feast." Chefs from Telluride's top restaurants will prepare mushroom dishes to be judged by Festival faculty. The winning chef will receive a chef's hat adorned with mushrooms, and Festival participants will dine on the mushroom dishes.

Experienced guides will lead daily fungus forays in the forests surrounding Telluride, generally productive of a wide variety of wild mushrooms, particularly edible species, like chanterelles and porcini.

Nationally recognized authorities on mushrooms will present lectures and workshops:

Ø Dr. Andrew Weil, author of the best-selling book *Spontaneous Healing*, on "Mushroom Cookery;"

Ø Gary Lincoff, past President of the North American Mycological Association, "Wild Mushroom Identification;"

Ø Paul Stamets, President of Fungi Perfecti (www.fungi.com), on "Gardening with Gourmet and Medicinal Mushrooms;"

Ø Dr. Emanuel Salzman, Co-editor of *Mushroom Poisoning*, on "Mushroom Poisoning;"

Ø John Corbin, Cultivation Specialist, on "Growing Mushrooms on Straw;" and others.

Complete information about the Festival program, registration, lodging, and travel is available on the Festival's web site: www.shroomfestival.com.

Telluride Mushroom Festival

Box 480503

Denver, CO, 80248.

303-296-9359.

Based in Denver, Fungophile has sponsored the Telluride Mushroom Festival for 23 years.

Haiku

By Ellen Jacobson

I came across a Haiku in the Denver Post and thought it might be fun if members wrote mushroom Haiku for Spores. It's easy and quick to do and anyone can do it. Only rules are 5-7-5 syllable set up.

Here is the first submission to start the ball rolling.

Gold hides behind tree.
Morel thinks it is not seen.
But I spy and snatch.

I (Spores Editor) thought that I would give it a try

Oyster stands on stump
Could be cut by another
I got it first Yeah

Please give it a try and send your Haiku to the editor for printing in a future *Spores Afield*.

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