

Next Meeting June 9th, 2008

SPORES Afield

The newsletter of the Colorado Mycological Society

June 2008



Message from The President

Updates: CMS has officially launched our mycoblitz website (<http://www.cmsweb.org/mycoblitz/index.htm>). We also have a schedule and registration form on the site to fill out if you would like to participate in collecting specimens over the weekend of August 23rd and 24th. The mycoblitz is a weekend long survey of mushrooms in the Rocky Mountain National Park. If you are new to the club, please see our website for a full description of this exciting weekend.

CMS has also launched a web discussion board, which replaces the previous message board we used which had serious problems. Just click on 'Forum' on the main CMS page. We will use this forum to talk about what species are up, announce last minute forays, post pictures of mushrooms we find, and generally stay in touch with each other.

How to learn mushrooms:

This is the start of a new mushroom year and I know there are a lot of new folks in the club. My goal with my first few presidents' messages is to cover some important issues before the mushroom season starts in earnest. Last month's message was about collecting mushrooms and this message is about learning the mushrooms. I know that learning mushrooms is a very daunting and overwhelming task, and hope to explain the process of how we learn mushrooms and what we can do to learn more mushrooms in the next paragraphs to take the edge off the whole process.

When children begin acquiring language, they learn the rules of grouping things together into categories based on object similarities and differences. They quickly begin to form an organized world view based on these constructs and add the items to their working lexicon. For example, first they learn that all big things that go on roads are cars, and within a year they can differentiate cars, trucks, and 18-wheelers. As adolescents and adults, they can often differentiate the make, model, and year of a vehicle by sight. Learning mushrooms is no different. Even beginner mushroomers can naturally segregate gilled mushrooms, pored mushrooms, and cup fungi into distinct groups, even if they can't articulate *why* they belong in different groups.

Photography Workshop

and author of many photos on his website, <http://www.capsandstems.com/>. In this 30 minute presentation, Chris will help us all take better digital photographs. He will explain how to choose a camera and which settings most effectively record the important identifying features of a mushroom, share his mushroom images with us, as well as his tips on capturing these elegant structures with a camera. He will

Continuing in our series of workshops, CMS's own Chris Hardwick will share his photography expertise. Chris is the webmaster



As a mushroomer is experienced to main branches of the fungal kingdom (boletes, gilled fungi, morels, etc...), they are learning exemplars of these specific families at the same time. For example, you might find and commit the features of the yellow morel (*Morchella esculenta*), and the common golden chanterelle (*Cantharellus cibarius*) to memory. Even if you only know these two mushrooms, you are bound to come across a mushroom that looks like one

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The Great Nebraska Mushroom Festival - 2008

By Johanna Seward



In southeastern Nebraska April 25th is known as Mushroom Eve. The date heralds the beginning of the morel season in the area and is well known to everyone. People even come from out of state to hunt for the delicacies. And we came too, taking two-lane roads across Nebraska whose beef, grain, and railroads make our urban life possible. One RV park advised us where to run should the tornado siren sound. Unfortunately the weather this year was unseasonably cold and windy—and remained that way—with the result that abundant morels were expected to be about a week behind schedule. We ate the morels we did find and had none left over to bring home. This fact, however, was no deterrent to the very good time we enjoyed in Peru, Nebraska, a small town on the banks of the Missouri River. First, there was a pancake breakfast at the City Hall on the morning of the 26th, to benefit an ill child. Then a formal welcome to the Great Nebraska Mushroom Hunt at which we were given mesh collecting bags (the Nebraska Department of Natural Resources, Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program is into spore dispersal) and maps of the areas where mushroom collecting is permitted. We were very clearly warned not to trespass on private land as a rumor was going about that there'd been a shooting the prior year as a result of a mushroom hunter

trespassing. Morels are taken seriously in Nebraska. The hunt began at Steamboat Trace Trailhead, a river bottom area along the Missouri and part of the Lewis and Clark Trail. River bottoms will teach you the meaning of the word MUD! Morels are alleged to love it.

After lunch we headed for Indian Caves State park nearby and forayed in that beautiful wooded area. The sun came out and it was wonderful hunting in a landscape of rolling hills among hardwood trees we don't have in Colorado. In one area with a view down to the Missouri River we met a family from Topeka who'd come to hunt morels to sell. They were headed home, sorely disappointed. Yet that very morning we'd been told of a man from the Emporia, Kansas area whose 200 pound morel harvest he considered meager! One man we met, sitting in his truck debating whether it was worth his while to start up through the woods, gave us his recipe for morels. He said, "I roll 'em in flour and salt and pepper and fry 'em in grease." This method of preparation is common in the area, sometimes with the addition of egg and cracker crumbs.

We headed back to Peru and arrived in time for Bunky Christensen's lively country and bluegrass music and the mushroom awards. Prizes were given for the first morel, the largest morel, Sporesmanship (awarded to a big-hearted young man who actually left morels for others to collect), and any other possible excuse. We received the prize of a birdhouse for having come the greatest distance to the festival, and Bernie was crowned King! Why this was so remains a mystery though it may have been because he burst into dance at one point due to Bunky's music. Anyone who knows Bernie will acknowledge he'd rather experience a root canal.

Sunday morning we headed back

to Indian Caves. Up on the hills in the woods one hears birdsong all around and as one goes downhill and nears the river the birds are drowned out by chorusing frogs. We returned to town in time for a BBQ and Pie feast to benefit the Peru Historical Foundation, again at City Hall. It was delicious.

Back at the Trailhead a presentation about the birds of southeast Nebraska was followed by another award ceremony with Mark Davis, the Omaha World Herald Outdoor Photojournalist whose photos were used in Michael Kuo's book, Morels. Amazingly, Michael Kuo and Mark Davis have not actually met so we invited Mark to the mycoblitiz in August and very much hope he can come so they can finally be introduced.

On the way back to Denver we stopped to find the Seward family plot in the Tecumseh Cemetery and visited cousins in Fremont. Although we didn't return with a large harvest of morels, we did come home with good memories of friendly people and the beautiful landscape of southeast Nebraska, a renewed appreciation of the importance of the state to the development of the West, another mushroom recipe . . . and a single Nebraska tick.

Postscript: On May 14th Mark Davis reported that he'd collected 65 pounds of morels and one of the festival organizers said that people were coming down out of the woods carrying five-gallon buckets full of them. ☺



Festival's Queen & King - Catherine & Bernie

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of these two. One day (if you're lucky), you'll come across a black morel (*Morchella angusticeps*) and some of the same brain cells that hold the information about your yellow morel will respond: you've just mentally grouped your yellow and black morel into a single construct. You go home and open your favorite mushroom book and flip to the morel pages to look for something that fits the characteristics of your new morel. Much of your future mushroom knowledge can be learned in a similar way – getting to more specific intra-species differences as your knowledge base increases. As you increase the knowledge of specific mushrooms within a given group, you reciprocally reinforce the characteristic properties of mushrooms that fit in that family.

The methods for increasing your knowledge base are the same strategies we employ in teaching students or children new material. The best way to learn things is to approach a subject from as many angles as possible.

- Read about them when you're not hunting
- Study them in the field. Keep a notebook and take field notes – note where and when you found them, what it looks like, if it has an odor, what was growing around them. All this information will help you later recall salient features of your mushroom, and in the short term they can greatly help someone you may bring the mushroom to later for a proper identification.
- If you've identified the specimen, read about any mushrooms that might look similar. Also read about the characteristics that put that mushroom into the family it is in – that will help you identify other examples of that family

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Upcoming Events

June 9th -

7:30 PM - "Tricholomas"- CMS member Ed Lubow's presentation will cover the family of Tricholomas which, of course, includes our favorite Tricholoma magnivelare or the Matsutake.

July 14th -

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

August 17th -

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

August 18th -

7:30 PM - Else Vellinga - Mushrooms: paths of discovery. An exploration of the new developments in mycology: the findings in relationships between species, the roles of mushrooms in the environment, how mushrooms spread their spores and much more.

September 8th -

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

October 13th -

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

October 19th -

5:00 PM - End of Season Gala Fungi Feast



2008 Foray Schedule

Saturday, June 14th -

Snowbank Mushroom Foray

This will be our 2nd annual snowbank mushroom foray. Do not expect to find any edible mushrooms on this foray. Last year we found about 10 species of snowbank mushrooms which included jelly fungi, polypores and some cup fungi. Although none were edible, they were all still interesting. Also note that we will be hiking through mud and snow – wear appropriate footwear and be prepared for inclement weather. This foray will be led by Rob Hallock and Christy Honigman.

Saturday, June 21st -

Morel Foray

Bill Windsor and Rob Hallock are co-leaders of this foray. The date is tentative and depends on weather conditions and the black morel fruiting. Check the website and on the CMS Forum the week before the foray for any updates or changes. You will find contact information for Bill and Rob on our Officers page. See the Forays page for meeting time and location.

End of July -

Collection for the Herbarium of Fungi

Ellen Jacobson leader. More information later.

Saturday, August 9th -

Led by Ellen Jacobson

Location to be determined.

Tentatively in August -

Echo Lake Foray

Chris Hardwick will lead a foray to the Mt. Evans/Echo Lake area sometime in August. More information later.

Friday, August 15th -

Annual Mushroom Fair Foray

Ellen Jacobson leader. More information later.

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later on.

- If you can't identify the mushroom, post a picture of it on our message board. Often times, we can at least narrow it down to a particular family or genus for you. Take it to one of our meetings if you can.
- Spend a few minutes going over specimens that are brought into our regular meetings every month. Did everyone see the cool *Peziza* (probably *Peziza domiciliana*) I brought in last month?

Consider further enrichment at a more intensive session – like one of the many weekend mushroom festivals in our region. There is CMS's own annual mushroom fair in August, as well as festivals in Telluride, Crested Butte, Buena Vista, and then there is the Rocky Mountain National Park mycoblight which CMS is hosting this year. There is even the national foray up in Idaho at the beginning of September. All these weekend mushroom events can broaden the knowledge of any mycophile – from the beginner to the expert.

There are a few reasons mushroom identification is intimidating. First, many of our mushroom names are multisyllabic, in Latin, and myco-geeks are changing the names all the time! Mushroom names always consist of a genus and species name (the binomial nomenclature). These names are derived from Latin, but there are almost always descriptive clues in the name of the mushroom. For example, the species name 'monticola' means 'occurring in the mountains, while the species name 'populinus' means 'occurring on poplar trees'. You don't

need to be burdened by the Latin names if you understand where they are derived from – then can in fact help you remember the name of the mushroom if you know the salient features of that mushroom. We have also have a few that don't make intuitive sense - like the genus name *Lycoperdon* (one of the puffballs). *Lyc* is from *Lycos* which means 'wolf', and *gala* is from a word that means 'passing wind'. *Lycoperdon* means 'wolf fart' – so think of that the next time you step on a puffball and the spores puff out, and you just might not forget the Latin name. There is an amazingly comprehensive list of Latin prefixes and suffixes towards the end of David Arora's 'Mushrooms Demystified' that can help teach you what all these things mean.

Genetic work is done on new mushrooms every day, and our view of which mushrooms are related to which change just as frequently. For example, the inica cap *Coprinus* was recently taken out of the *Coprinus* genus when it was discovered that it wasn't really related to *Coprinus comatus*. Following international botanical guidelines for naming things, the earliest named example in the genus, *C. comatus*, got to keep its name and other things in *Coprinus* were moved into their own genera. Now we have genera like *Coprinopsis* (the new home of the alcohol inky) and *Coprinellus* (the new home of the inica cap *Coprinus*). These new names merely mean 'Coprinus-like' and 'diminutive-Coprinus'. Further complicating our lives, the gender of these new genus names changed, so the suffix of the species name 'atramentarius' (the alcohol inky) had to accommodate the new gender and is now 'atramentaria'. Got it? Latin names are much preferred to

common names. We had a 'chicken fat' mushroom out east that I learned very quickly is not the same 'chicken fat' mushroom people talk about up in Montana. I was out here and they were raving about how delicious the 'chicken fat' mushroom was and how they couldn't wait to fry some up, while I was thinking to myself "these must be very hungry and desperate people to be eating something as disgusting as that". Then I saw that their chicken fat mushroom and saw that it wasn't the same thing I had previously called the chicken fat mushroom out East and all was well. Remember when Daniel Winkler was telling us that the name of a mushroom that the Tibetan people pick and eat merely translates into 'mushroom'? And of course the common Russian name for *Boletus edulis* translates into 'white mushroom'. The Latin names aren't too bad once you get used to them, and once you know them, you can converse with anyone in the world about them. Fortunately for all of us, Latin is a dead language and the correct way to pronounce the Latin name of a mushroom is the way that everyone else says it. Different people in different parts of the country pronounce a mushroom differently – and this is perfectly fine. Just keep your ears tuned to how we say something and try and copy it. No one should cop an attitude with you if you get a name wrong, or call a mushroom by the previous name.

I hope this has helped you understand a bit about how we process mushroom names, how they are named, and why we use confusing Latin names when we can just say the common names. Hope to see you at the June meeting.☺



The colorful new CMS T-Shirts will be on sale at the June meeting. We have produced a relatively small quantity this year and expect them to sell out in the most popular sizes. If you want to declare your passion for all things fungi to the world you need one of these shirts!

Spores Afield

Volunteers Needed

CMS could use 25 minutes of your time – and you don't need to know a single thing about mushrooms. Can you sell T-shirts for 25 minutes before a meeting this year? The T-shirts will be set up for you, ready at the beginning of the meeting, as well as boxed and removed after the meeting. CMS is looking to have a different person (or family?) selling the T-shirts each month for the rest of the year. It's a wonderful way to get to know other club members. If this sounds like something you would like to do, please email Rob Hallock (Rob.Hallock@UCHSC.edu) with the month you would be willing to sell the T-shirts.

Know Your Mushrooms

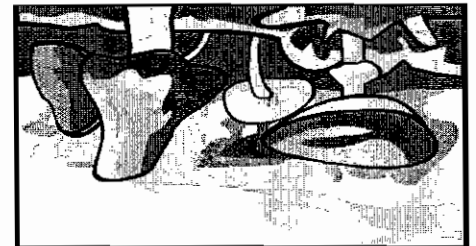
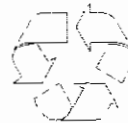
A new film by Ron Mann, features Larry Evans as a mushroom gypsy who introduces viewers to the amazing world of fungi and fungifolk. Due out this autumn, this full-length feature film features footage of a Bolivian mushroom hunt, the Alaska Morel Foray of 2005, and the annual Telluride Mushroom Festival. The film includes interviews with Gary Lincoff & Art Goodtimes, many animated sequences, original music by the Flaming Lips, and lots of fascinating facts about fungi.

You can find out more about this and Ron's other films at his website www.sphinxproductions.com

End of Season Fungi Feast

Will take place at the Boulder Cork Restaurant on October 19. Details will be posted in the July SPORES, but folks interested in participating in this gala event should put the date on their calendar now so as not to forget, The Dinner always sells out early.

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