

Next Meeting July 11th, 2005

SPORES Afield

The newsletter of the Colorado Mycological Society

July 2005



Greetings Members!

Despite ample moisture, it has not been a banner year for me in the collection of black morels. My current 'stock' is at about 33% of a typical year. On the optimistic side, I am still finding black morels at the 9,000 ft.

level and I am betting that I will be able to foray for them through the 4th of July weekend.

Some other good "dinner table" mushrooms should soon be making an appearance. I am starting to find the 'Fairy Ring' *Marasmius oreades* mushrooms in grass fields and we should also soon be finding various *Agaricus* mushrooms. Also about this time of year I often start finding the 'Velvet Foot' *Flammulina velutipes* mushroom growing on dead aspen trees in the mountains.

I think we will have a good summer fruiting this year, and the Mushroom Fair should be exciting. If you can help with the fair, please contact *SporesAfield* editor (and President Elect), Norm Birchler (nbirchler@comcast.net) who is the Fair Chair this year.

I would really enjoy hearing some feedback from members on ideas of how to make CMS a more enjoyable experience for everyone. Are there any topics or activities for meetings that you would like to see covered? More Forays? How about a Foray/Camping trip? Please feel free to voice your opinions!

Good Forays to you all!

Speaker for the July meeting:

Dr. Michelle Seidl

"Cortinarius Unleashed"

Dr. Michelle Seidl of Seattle will visit to enlighten us on one of the most common, yet most difficult genera, *Cortinarius*. On a summer foray, you will probably see more "corts" than any other species of mushroom. Identifying them to genus is often fairly easy, but determining species is quite another thing. Dr. Seidl says, "Opening up this 'can of worms', I'll explain some ins and outs about this very large genus, dissect it a bit, explain how it's constructed and currently where we are with *Cortinarius*. A historical perspective from this country and worldwide will be discussed. Characters worth noting and what to look for will be presented for each of the main groups. The talk will end on a travel note to the north summarizing 3 years of collecting *Cortinarii* with Drs. Meinhard Moser and Joe Ammirati in Grand Teton and Yellowstone National Parks." For the benefit of newer members, Dr. Ammirati, University of Washington, and the late Dr. Moser, Professor Emeritus, University of Innsbruck, Innsbruck, Austria are recognized as some of the top authorities on this difficult genus.

Dr. Seidl (let's call her Michelle, which I'm sure she'll prefer) was born in Spokane, WA, but grew up in the San Francisco Bay Area. In pursuit of an undergraduate degree in Biological Sciences, she attended Humboldt State University. Here she got "turned on" to fungi and the fabulous world of mycology by Dr. David Largent.

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Upcoming Events

- July 11th** Dr Michelle Seidl will give a lecture on Cortinarius. Also see "Upcoming Forays" on page 3.
- Aug 12th** Fair foray, see "Upcoming Forays" on page 3.
- Aug. 13th** Fair Setup.
- Aug. 14th** Annual CMS Mushroom Fair at Denver Botanic Gardens, The Fair identifier this year is Dr. Else Vellinga.
- Aug. 15th** "Introduction to Mushrooms" Dr. Else Vellinga, of the Plant and Microbial Biology Department at the University of California, Berkeley.
- Aug. 18-21st** Telluride Mushroom Festival. For additional info: call 303-296-9359 www.shroomfestival.com
- Aug. 18-21st** Crested Butte Mushroom Festival For additional info: call Roger Kahn at 303-322-5532 or 970-349-0238 www.cbmushfest.com
- Aug. 20-21st** 11th Annual Buena Vista King Boletus Festival, see top of this page column 2
- Sept. 12th** Cook & Taste, **Chairperson needed**, contact CMS President William Windsor.
- Oct. 10th** Chef Smailer of the Boulder Cork. His restaurant hosts our "End of the Season Fungi Feast".
- Oct. 23rd** "End of the Season Fungi Feast" at the Boulder Cork.

Bring mushrooms for identification and display to any meeting.

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

The **11th Annual Buena Vista King Boletus Festival** will be held August 20 and 21st. For more information, please call the Buena Vista Heritage Museum at 719-395-8458.

"End of the Season Fungi Feast" (Sunday, October 23), mark that date on your calendars, the dinner menu and all the reservation information will be published in the August *SporesAfield*.

For more information related to CMS, contact:

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Spores Afield

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

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

Upcoming Forays

Please note all forays meet at 9:00 am in the northeast parking lot (also known as the T-Rex lot) of the Morrison exit at I-70 unless otherwise announced. If you carpool from that point which is strongly encouraged, due to limited parking at most foray locations, please chip in gas money. You must be a member of CMS to take part in the forays.

July 10th (Sunday) Tom Taggart will lead a foray with our guest Dr. Michelle Seidl.

August 6th (Saturday) Tom Ruzicka will lead a foray into the Winter Park area.

August 12th (Friday) Ellen Jacobsen will lead a foray with Dr. Else Vellinga to collect specimens for the Fair.

Be sure to bring your CMS membership card or your current copy of *SporesAfield* with you. If you are not a member you can become one at the foray for the standard new member fee of \$23, which will also get you copies of *SporesAfield* for the rest of the year.

Forays may be cancelled in the event of dry weather. Call first if in doubt.

We have a need for people to lead forays. You do not need to be an expert identifier to lead a foray. You only need to be willing to lead a group of people to a location where mushrooms can be found. If you would be willing to lead a foray, please contact Tom Ruzicka 303-447-2740 or via e-mail at: tomruzicka@mindspring.com.

Note from Ed Swanberg:

The inoculation foray on June 11th was a success with everyone having a good time. We inoculated cotton wood stumps and logs along Boulder Creek. The people in Boulder, Colorado are a little different from people in your average American city. When they saw 10 people walking down the path with electric drills and squirt bottles in their hands they thought that was normal!

Obituary

News has been received of the death of Madame Andrea Roberte Nino, wife of former CMS member, Robert Nino, of 2018 Thompson Rd., Richmond, TX. Madame Nino passed away in Houston on April 26, 2005. Cause of death was pancreatic cancer.

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Between her BA and MA degrees, she worked at the Forestry Science Lab in Corvallis OR on a variety of mycological projects including: studying *Phellinus weirii* (laminated root rot); the role fungi played in plant reestablishment following the 1980 Mt. St. Helens eruption; small mammal mycophagy and truffle-like fungi. For her MA degree she studied under Dr. Harry Thiers at San Francisco State University doing a 2 year mycofloristic study of Wunderlich Park, San Mateo County, CA. Then for 4.5 years she worked at the UC Berkeley herbarium with the nonvascular cryptogamic collection. In 1999 she completed her Ph.D at the University of WA in Seattle under Dr. Joe Ammirati. Her thesis was on the systematics of two sections in *Cortinarius* subgenus *Myxacium* (the slimy ones!). Since that time, she has done contract work with the US Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management, identifying fungi for the Survey and Manage project as part of the Northwest Forest Plan. She also taught Botany and Mycology at the University of Washington. During that time and more recently she worked as a mycologist/microbiologist for GM Labs, Inc. Currently she works for Environmental Microbiology Laboratory, Inc., one of the leaders in the indoor air quality industry.

As for her work with *Cortinarius*, that will continue on the side and consist of writing much-needed keys and publishing whenever possible. There is an enormous need for published keys of *Cortinarius* species. This unruly genus can be conquered, one bit at a time. Our July meeting is the time for each and every CMS member to start.

In search of the elusive Snow Morel

By William Windsor

On Friday evening, May 28, 2004 I received a phone call from Norm Birchler, our esteemed editor. "The weather report is perfect Bill" he said, "Thunderstorms all weekend with a chance of snow in the high Country". "Lets go camping."

He did not need to say anymore, for both of us had long desired to hunt for Snow Morels in Colorado. On this late spring weekend, it looked like we would finely get our chance. "Karen and I will swing by your place at 10:00am" he said, "No wait, make that 8:00am, maybe 9:00am, we should get an early start, say 10:00, no make that 8:00am." A pause, "Yeah, 9:00am, be ready to go". With a firm understanding of our departure time, on Saturday morning I started to pack.

The Snow Morel (*Morchella imaginarios*) almost never fruits in Colorado. Fruiting requires a period of warm spring temperatures followed by a sudden and unexpected snowfall. This type of weather pattern rarely occurs in the spring in the Colorado Rocky Mountains. Under ideal conditions, the initial warming of the soil stimulates the rapid growth of the mycelium. Following that, a sudden decrease in temperature is needed or the fruiting of the snow morel will not take place.

Since I expected snow and freezing temperature, I carefully packed my best cold weather gear. I thoughtfully stuffed a pair of long-johns and a sleeping bag rated to 45 degrees in my backpack. I wore a light spring windbreaker jacket. It was 8:00am and I was ready to go.

At 9:00am the paperboy came around. "Going camping?" He asked while eying my backpack, "Say, you might find some of those Snow Morels this weekend." Obviously, the lad had spent some time with TV and newspapers. With the quality and in-depth of reporting of our modern media, the kid knew his mushrooms. "Yeah" I admitted, "I'm going for Snow Morels." "They featured those in the 'Get Out and About You Lazy Bum' section last week," the paperboy informed me.

"I liked how the paper was careful to describe cap size, sporing structures, spore color and stem characteristics", he continued. "On Fox in the Henhouse News they mentioned that mycologists suspect that the mushroom may have a mycorrhizal relationship with the Colorado Palm tree and that the Snow Morel is now endangered due to global cooling". "Really?" I responded with some skepticism, "Global Cooling?" "Yup" he explained. "Fundamental Scientists have found irrefutable evidence that the enforcement of environmental laws has resulted in Global Cooling." "This in turn interrupts the Snow Morel's fruiting cycle by eliminating the warm period that it needs to develop its mycelium." He was correct of course, I really do not see how anyone can consider themselves informed if they do not read the newspaper and watch TV.

I made myself a healthy breakfast being careful to include all five of the major food groups; sugar, fat, salt, caffeine and starch. Karen and Norm arrived some time later, but still within the original range of possibilities. Our plan was to set up camp in the central mountains at about 10,000 ft. If it did snow, I would hunt for Snow Morels while Norm and Karen did some ice water kayaking. We traveled over a dirt road mountain pass of nearly 13,000 ft with no guard rails and huge drop-offs at the edge of the road. If the snow did arrive, our views of the rugged mountains would not be compromised by unsightly safety rails.

Some mycologists consider the Snow Morel to be an albino form of *Morchella angusticeps*, however I do not believe this to be the case as they do have a very light brown 'tinge' to their near perfect whiteness. The best way to spot Snow Morels is to seek that slight brownish tone against fresh white snow. Vera Evenson of the Denver Botanical Gardens has been seeking a prime specimen of the Snow Morel and she warned me about storing the fruiting bodies in a container that kept their temperature below freezing. The fruiting bodies actually generate heat through a bio-reaction process that allows them grow through the snow. This same bio-reaction makes the mushroom unstable above 32 degrees.

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While driving to the campsite, we spotted several stands of Colorado Palm trees mixed with mountain pineapple. These are located exclusively above 10,000 ft in canyon oases. The palm fronds were just leafing out and the pineapple was in bloom so our timing was perfect. Now all we needed was for the weather to cooperate.

Arriving at the campsite, we pitched our tents. Actually we pitched Norm and Karen's tents since they lent one to me for the weekend. I noticed that the tent they lent me was completely watertight, so I made certain to punch a hole or two through the tent floor as well as the ground cloth so that it could drain in the event that a rain cloud somehow found its way inside the tent. To date, they have not thanked me for doing this, but maybe it's because they simply did not notice it yet.

It rained briefly just after set-up but the temperatures stayed above freezing. Yes, it was disappointing, but the weekend had just started and the sky was a wonderful ominous grey color. After setting up, we drove to the 'put-in' location for Karen and Norm to kayak. They were hoping for ice, but were willing to accept that the class 3+ rapids would be a tepid 36 degrees. "Gosh", Karen sighed, "I don't think we will even get a chance to wear our pogies (special gloves that attach to the paddle)." I looked at the roiling, frothing near freezing water smashing over and between a field of boulders and tree trunks stretched over the narrow and fast moving creek. "Have fun!" I yelled above the roar of the river.

Because the air temperature was a blistering 44 degrees, there was no sense in searching for Snow Morels. Instead, I looked for Humming Bird nests in forest that lined the creek. I was lucky and found an empty one in the nook of an aspen tree. I pulled the lichen covered nest from the branch and forced it into my water bottle. Shaking the water bottle a few times, I drank down the nest in a few gulps. Mmmmm, bird nest soup, delicious.

After picking Karen and Norm up from down river, we returned to camp and I made Morel Stroganoff with some dehydrated yellow morels. It was a nice hardy meal that we ate huddled

under a tarp in the freezing rain. Looking at the snow mixed with the rain, Norm commented, "It looks promising, Bill. We might get to do an ice run tomorrow AND get to look for Snow Morels". I had to agree, the dreary weather did look most promising. I put on two shirts and two pants (all the clothes that I brought with me) and crawled into the tent and my sleeping bag. With nightfall came a cold, cold wind and I found that I could not sleep. Thoughts of Snow Morels ran through my mind. That and my wholly inadequate sleeping bag just would not warm up.

With the first light of morning, we were out of our tents and firing up the stoves for hot tea and breakfast. It was snowing out and a glance at the peaks revealed trees covered with snow. Karen cooked breakfast and then we quickly broke camp. Norm pulled his wet kayaking gear from the drying line tied between two trees. It was frozen solid. "I can't wait to get into these frozen pants!" exclaimed Norm. "I'm ready to play on the frozen river". "I don't know" I responded. "It's snowing pretty hard, we may have to pass on the kayaking in order to get in enough time to look for Snow Morels."

As mentioned earlier, the proper environment to hunt for Snow Morels is within a high canyon oasis. Look along the water's edge as well as any tributaries feeding the oasis. Timing is absolutely critical. The snow must be between 3 to 4 inches deep. Any more and the Snow Morels will be completely covered with snow and impossible to find. Any less and the Snow Morels will not fruit.

Cats seem to be naturally attracted to the scent of Snow Morels and are often used by Europeans to locate the difficult-to-find fungi. Once found, Snow Morels must be picked with gloved hands due to their sensitivity to warm temperatures. Most mycologists concur that mittens are a poor choice for this purpose, especially if young cats are used to help locate the Snow Morels. Reports from Europe often reference lost mittens in association with little kittens.

We stopped at the first oasis we encountered as Norm carefully navigated the dirt road up Cottonwood Pass.

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Spreading out, we walked very slowly between the Palm Trees scanning the fresh snow for any sign of discoloration. Karen was the first one to find a Snow Morel. "Whoop-whoop!" she hollered. "Whoop?" inquired Norm. "Whooooo!" replied Karen. "What's all the whooping about?" I asked. "Oh", replied Norm, "Karen can't whistle". "Married folks" I muttered to myself, "They oughta come with de-coder rings". "What the...?" responded Norm. "High Maintenance" Karen knowingly agreed. The thing is, having been good friends with Karen and Norm for several years, I actually understood this 'conversation'. "De-coder ring? I don't need no stinking de-coder ring!" I thought to myself.

The Snow Morel Karen found was a beauty. It was about 2 1/2 inches tall and perfectly white except for the very edges of the 'pits' which were a light tan color. A picture-perfect textbook specimen. Karen put the Snow Morel into the cooler for safe transport. We continued our search and with a bit of time, all of us were rewarded with finding a number of prime Snow Morels. Altogether we had collected about 36 of them, an outstanding foray!

At mid-day we started the return trip home. Norm mentioned a restaurant that he knew that was on the way and we all agreed it would be great to stop for a meal. The drive over Cottonwood Pass must have been especially nice for Norm who did all the driving. The snow covered dirt road combined with sometimes blinding blowing snow made for a relaxing laid-back pace. I quickly fell asleep in the back seat, so I assume it was equally relaxing for Norm. After about an hour and a half we arrived at the restaurant. The parking lot was full. Really full. People were waiting both indoors and outside in the cold. "Dang, Norm!" I exclaimed, "You must be right about this being a good restaurant, at least half the town is here." We entered the restaurant to the sound of happy diners engaged in warm conversation. Checking in at the reception desk we were informed of a minimum 45 minute wait. "Let's check out that other restaurant we passed up the road" I offered. "Maybe we could get in there."

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We drove to the other restaurant and found the parking lot empty. I noticed that the restaurant had just one or two patrons as I pushed aside a cob-web at the doorway. Entering the restaurant we were met with the smell of hot cooking oil. The restaurant had a self-serve counter for taking orders. The 'server' was about 16 years old and the 'chef' could not be a day over 19 years old. A sign on the wall read "We don't accept checks and we don't play with bees". "What do you think?" Karen inquired skeptically? "Looks fine to me" my stomach responded, completely by-passing my brain. "Yeah, it looks okay" Norm's stomach concurred.

We quickly consumed our meals and returned to the drive home. Along the way, we passed spot after spot of prime black Morel habitat, at just the right timing, but covered with about four inches of fresh snow. "You know", I commented, "If our plan was to come all this way to hunt Black Morels, this snow would totally prevent us from finding any." "Good thing our goal was to foray for Snow Morels" I cheerfully exclaimed. It was then that I first heard the hissing noise from the back of the vehicle.

What I did not realize at the time, is that the lid to the cooler had come loose from the bumps on the dirt road. Our precious Snow Morels, now exposed to the heat in the car were undergoing a process of rapid degeneration much like the deliquescent process of ink cap mushrooms. By the time we returned to Boulder, the Snow Morels would be nothing more than a gooey mass of white spores.

Such is life.

The thing about life experience, is that it is indeed unknowable. The emergence of spring carries the promise of morels, but not a guarantee that they will fruit in good numbers. Likewise, a planned foray and camping can be impacted by poor weather. When such things occur, it is best to not get too attached to a specific goal, but rather to make the best of the 'now-moment' presented.

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THE BIGGEST MOST EXCITING EVENT OF THE FUNGAL YEAR: THE TWENTY-NINTH ANNUAL MUSHROOM FAIR IS NOT FAR OFF!

The time is now to decide what you want to do to be a part of this very special event. Lack of experience or knowledge is not be a deterrent. The Fair is intended as a learning experience, not only for the general public, but also for our own CMS members. What a fun way to learn more about our favorite subject!

Following are some of the committees on which you can serve (or in some cases, even head up) and some of the friends you'll be working with (this is a great way to get better acquainted and to make new friends). Please call the chairs where listed, or you can contact Fair Chair Norm Birchler, 303-440-7123, or nbirchler@comcast.net, for more information as to what is involved. A signup sheet is included with this issue of Spores.

Arts and Crafts display: Items can be handmade or commercially produced, but must have a mushroom theme. Photographs of mushrooms are included. This display requires at least two members overseeing it at all times.

Book Sales: Adele Mikelevicius, 303-771-9425.

Cultivation: Chris Hardwick and Ed Swanberg, 303-485-8952.

Dyeing and Paper Making:

Edible and Poisonous display panels: Linnea and Lee Gillman, 303-935-2390.

Forays: Tom Taggart, 303-423-5317, Ellen Jacobson, 303-741-3836.

Identification/Recording: Dr. Else Vellinga, Vera Evenson, Ellen Jacobson.

Sorting: Lots of folks are needed for this, both Saturday afternoon and Sunday. This is the very best way to learn mushrooms and get plenty of exercise! Beginners are welcome!! We need to know in advance if you will take part in order to add your name to the list for free admission at the front gate.

Kiddie Korner: Ruth Davis, 303-322-7908. If you love children, you'll love helping at this station.

Membership: Greet fair-goers and potential members at the door. Lots of people will join on the spot.

Natural Habitat: William Windsor 303-544-6069

Photography: Photograph specimens and give advice.

Physical Arrangements: Tom Taggart, 303-423-5317, and Gary Pickett. Help set up the tables and displays. Lots of good clean fun!

Preservation: A new display possibility, and something that the public would find very helpful. If you are good at this (drying, pickling, etc.), please call. This display can be your own personal creation.

Publicity: Jason Salzman, 303-433-6961. Write press releases and make contact with the media.

T-shirt Sales:

Toxicology/Rocky Mountain Poison & Drug Center: Marilyn Shaw, 303-377-1278.

Don't be bashful. We won't know you want to help if you don't call or sign up on the enclosed sheet. And don't delay! We'll all sleep better when all the posts are filled. Don't know what you want to do? Volunteer to "Help Where Needed". Whatever you do, don't miss this once-a-year fun event!

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This fictional essay was inspired by an actual camping trip Memorial Day weekend 2004.

While the weather may have not have been ideal, it did contain its own visual beauty. The sight of spring flowers dusted with snow is striking. The rugged mountain peaks were spectacular. Perhaps most endearing, is that the warmth and the camaraderie of good friends easily offsets the discomfort of cold temperatures. We did not collect any black morels that weekend, but we did collect a most excellent experience of unexpected visual beauty and a memory of quality time shared between friends.

Spores Afield

How cute can you (or should you) get?

LIFE magazine now is included as an insert in the weekend (Friday) editions of both The Denver Post and The Rocky Mountain News. In the June 10, 2005 issue, the Food section is entitled, "Cute Cakes for Any Taste", and gives instructions for making especially tempting cupcakes. Guess what tops the list? Did you guess a mushroom cupcake? And need I tell you which mushroom? Right! That most colorful of shrooms, *Amanita muscaria* - red frosting with white mint spots. Guess I'm just a worry wart to think this might give a child the idea that the real mushroom might be just as yummy as the cupcake version. But then I have a right to be concerned. I'm the one who gets the calls when this happens.

Marilyn Shaw, Toxicology Chair

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