

Fall 2004

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE WISCONSIN MYCOLOGICAL SOCIETY

September 2004

Volume 21 Number 3

- 1 MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT by Chuck Fonaas
- 2 WMS EVENTS
- 3 ANNUAL PHOTO FORAY by Chuck Fonaas
- 4 BRISTOL WOODS FORAY by Peter Vachuska
- 5 WALKING IRON FORAY by Peter Vachuska
- 6 HUNTING WITH MY UNCLE PETE by Mike Mulford
- 7 WMS NEWSLETTER AUTHOR GETS PUBLISHED IN BRITISH JOURNAL
- 8 FALSE MORELS: WHEN IS A GYROMITRA A DISCINA? by Steve Nelsen
- 9 RECIPE: BREADED MUSHROOMS by John S. Komosa

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

As the new President of the WMS, I find myself in new territory. And as is typical of one in new territory, I feel a bit lost. I'm certain, however, that with the help of our board members, I'll find my way. In fact, I wish I was as certain of this season's mushrooming. It started out so wet this past spring that I thought it a sure bet that our baskets would be full this year. July, however, was quite dry and my optimism was replaced with doubt. Regardless of this, I am excited about WMS and my first experiences as its president. There are some great forays coming up this fall, as well as the winter meetings, starting with the annual wine and cheese event in January. In closing, as I write this, it is starting to rain... Ah, there is hope.

by Chuck Fonaas

WMS EVENTS

October 2 (Saturday) -- Fred Hainer--Tula Erskine Memorial Foray -- Point Beach State Forest led by Chuck Soden.

October 9 (Saturday) -- Illinois Foray led by Beth Jarvis.

October 21 (Thursday) -- Fall Mushroom Dinner at Morel's Restaurant in Middleton. Madison Interest Group.

November 1 (Monday) -- Fourth Annual Fall Mushroom Dinner at the Riversite Restaurant in Cedarburg.

Members should have received announcements for these events.

ANNUAL PHOTO FORAY

by Chuck Fonaas

On Saturday, August 28th, the annual Photo Foray was held at the Scuppernong Springs Trail in the South Kettle Moraine State Forest. Since this trail was one that I personally had not "mushroomed" in before, I was not quite sure

what to expect. The results, while not overwhelming, were better than we've had on this particular foray in recent years. The rain which fell off and on throughout most of the previous night stopped long enough for us to enjoy what turned out to be a pretty nice foray. Attendance was good, as we had about fifteen or so foragers that headed off into the trails. One of our group went home with a Hen of the Woods as well as some Chicken of the Woods. I guess it was a good day for poultry. Some other finds included *Entoloma abortivum*, *Helvella crispa* and *elastica*, *Hydnum repandum*, one of the most beautiful specimens of *Laccaria laccata* I've ever seen and some of the largest *Polyporus squamosus* I've ever seen. Lastly, I must toot my own horn so to speak. I found something rather rare I'm told. It's a polypore called *Globifomes*. At first glance it looks rather like a brownish lump. Actually, it looks like a brownish lump at second and third glance, too. Anyway, since it is apparently somewhat rare I had to mention it. Also, for those of you that attended the foray---please remind me next year NOT to stand on any yellowjacket nests while photographing mushrooms. Ah, not to worry... at least I didn't get stung.

BRISTOL WOODS FORAY by Peter Vachuska

We had a good foray at Bristol Woods on 9-11-2004. Our usual leader couldn't make it and emailed me the night before asking me to take over. Which I did with a minimum of leadership. ("Woods are in this direction, be back by noon.") By the start of the foray, early morning clouds had blown off, becoming a clear cool day, perfect for a foray -- unfortunately there had been too many "perfect days" prior to that day and the area was somewhat dry without the potential bounty of the woods. We did see some *Grifola frondosa* and *Laetiporus sulphureus*, but not in quantity. Honeys and aborted *entoloma* likewise were not plentiful. A colorful clump of orange *Omphalotus illudens* was collected and it was good to see our rare *Camarops petersii* again.

The best part of the foray was the good talk to be had before, after, and during it. This foray was especially special as it marked the return of a good friend and WMS member, Rich Miller. Rich was quite active in the WMS, writing pamphlets and serving on the board of directors, up to seven years ago, shortly after he got married and adjusted priorities. It was very good to see him and his wife Gloria again. Old Friends--New Friends. A good foray.

WALKING IRON FORAY by Peter Vachuska

We had a unique foray at Walking Iron County Park on Sunday Sept. 18th. It was an afternoon foray starting at 1:00 pm, which I don't recall having before, but which worked out very well. Our leader was Hal Burdsall, who is one of America's most respected mycologists, specializing in wood-decay fungi. Hence, we saw more than an average number of wood rotters. The group of forayers was small but professional. Out of the group of eight, there were two mycologists and one lichenologist. Alan Parker (a fourth mycologist, including

Hal) was there briefly, but had twisted his knee earlier in the day and just wished us well before leaving. Also artist Nancy Mladenoff came a little late and met us after an hour or so.

The size and nature of the group facilitated field identification and immediate discussion of the fungi found. This, however, made for a very slow walk. We spent 3 1/2 hours on the short loop. But when we returned to the vehicles, there was no need to lay out specimens -- we said our goodbyes and left.

We found a good variety of fungi, about 50 species with something for everyone. For example, most foragers took home some of the large *Hydnum repandum* to eat. We found very nice *Boletus parasiticus* attached to *Scleroderma*. The prettiest fungi was a *Byssocorticium* that was a bright blue (although it was resupinate on the bottom of a log).

HUNTING WITH MY UNCLE PETE by Mike Mulford

I had a friend many many years ago that used to take me to the woods and show me things. I will never forget my first "morel experience" (who would?) He was an old man then, almost 60, and couldn't get around too well. My home was S.W. Iowa, about 20 miles north of the Missouri/Iowa line. I was about 12 and was already skilled in fur trapping (I used to make enough in 2 months to carry me for the entire year), fishing and hunting. This same "old man" had taught me all of those skills. We drove to the country and went to a timber a few miles from home. He made me take the "Mushroom Oath" of secrecy while holding my empty bread sack next to my heart. It may be the same up here, but down there it was a sin against God to put mushrooms into anything except an empty plastic bread sack. (Either white or whole wheat are both acceptable.)

Over the fence we went. It was early in the year, so he said his best luck was on south facing hills near the bottom, and look for dead elm trees. Later in the spring, go to the top of hills, north side near dead elm trees. I may have those two locations reversed because that was 46 years ago and now I am the old man wanting to teach my grandson. At any rate we walked about 100 yards and he stopped and said we should set and rest. I said that was fine as I was afraid he was very tired, because you see when you are 12 and someone is 58 it seems like they are 158. We sat down and he started telling me how you should walk slowly and how sometimes you can almost step on them without seeing them. Ours down there had more of a gray color than the brown color these up here have. While we were sitting there, I moved over a few inches because I was setting on a stick and happened to notice a morel right next to my hand. "Uncle Pete, Uncle Pete!!!! Here is one right here!!!!" He just smiled and said "Do you see any more???" They were everywhere. "Did these just grow while we were setting here???" a 12 year old asked. He said no, but I realized he had just made his point. Of course he had seen these before we set down. His point was to walk slowly and to observe.

We picked around 6 pounds in just a few minutes and then walked for another 2 hours without finding one more. It was time to go and we were a 1/2 mile from the car, so we took a short cut across a plowed field. In the middle of the plowed field, we found a cluster of maybe 4 more pounds. They were all growing in a 10-15 foot diameter circle. That find was unplanned by Uncle Pete but it underlined a previous point he had made. You can find them anywhere.

It is truly amazing that when a kid is fishing, hunting, trapping and finding mushrooms how little time is left to get into trouble. There is little doubt in my mind that I would have ended up in prison if it had not been for Uncle Pete. Many times the opportunity presented itself to get into serious mischief, but I always held back because I never wanted to hurt Uncle Pete.

My grandkids are all "A" students and I will never have to worry about their actions with or without mushrooms. But I would love the chance to teach them and spend time with them in the woods, experiencing some of the wonders God has given us. Uncle Pete told me that besides mushrooms there are many many plants, roots and bulbs that are super to eat. Wild onions were common in our area, which we picked.

We hunted in the fall as we lived dead center in the best hunting in the Midwest. Pheasant season closed at 4:30 pm and Uncle Pete would be waiting for me when I got out of school at 3:30. We would road hunt until 4:30 for pheasants and then rabbit hunt until 6:00 when it closed. Somewhere here there is a point. Asparagus grows wild in the ditches and along fence lines in my part of the state. I never once saw my uncle smoke or take a drink, but we always had empty beer cans in the back of the truck. They were the old steel top cans that you had to use a church key to open. What we did with them was take a piece of wire and put it through the holes and then hang them on the bottom wire of a roadside fence. In the spring, it is almost impossible to find wild asparagus with all of the dead grass that is knee high. So, while we were pheasant hunting, we would look for full grown asparagus plants (they are easy to see and have little berries on them) and then hang the beer cans where the dead plants were. Then in the spring, you look for the beer cans, part the grass and there they are.

WMS NEWSLETTER AUTHOR GETS PUBLISHED IN BRITISH JOURNAL

Steve Nelsen's works, which are well known to the readers of the WMS Newsletter, have attracted the attentions of much larger organizations. His article "C.H. Peck: An Old Bold Mycophage?" appeared in the July 2004 issue of the eminent journal "Field Mycology," published by the British Mycological Society. Field Mycology is a wonderfully colorful quarterly journal that discusses many fungi and fungal topics of interest to the serious non-professional. (Steve's article originally appeared in the March issue of the WMS Newsletter in 2001.) Not only did his article appear in the July issue, but the back cover of that issue was graced by his photo of *Sarcosphaera coronaria*, which was our cover photo in September of 2001. My guess is that they have just begun to discover the talent that we've known for

years.

FALSE MORELS: WHEN IS A GYROMITRA A DISCINA?

by Steve Nelsen

Adrienne and I walked around the short section of the Ice Age Trail starting from the East entrance to the Mauthe Lake Recreation Area on May 18th. We saw disappointingly little; some brown *Mycena* on a pine stump, and a few *Omphalina* *epichysium* on a log, but no morels. However, we did find several darkish brown, thick and mostly flat disc fungi up to 5 cm in diameter. They had lighter undersides, with small stems that were indistinct in some cases and about 2 or 3 cm long in others. Some had spore-bearing upper surfaces that were nearly smooth, but others were quite bumpy. They were close to, or occasionally on, very rotten pine stumps and buried debris, near the top of the first climb, on both sides of the trail. A microscope showed that they had unusually large spores, 36-42microns long and up to 15microns wide, including pointy extensions at either end, and three big oil drops, the center one largest. N. S. Weber's *A Morel Hunter's Companion* (1988), the best book I have seen for morels and false morels, has them as *Discina macrospora* Bubak (1904). The common name is "pigs ears", and they are often claimed to be edible, but we were not particularly tempted, being fixated on real morels this week. These *G. macrospora* are the first we've seen in Wisconsin, although we did see others a few years ago when we went to the Porcupine Mountains in the UP of Michigan in the spring; they are apparently more common farther north than as far south as we usually look. There are two or three other species of *Discina* with smaller spores and differently-shaped spore ends in the eastern U.S. (and others in Europe). We also saw the yellower species *leucoxantha* in the Porkies, and had followed a distinct group of lighter and redder brown specimens that had smaller spores and could be *perlata* or *warnerii* for over five years in the 1990s near Turkey Hollow in Wyalusing, but we have not seen it for the last three years. *Discina* and *Gyromitra* comprise the false morel family (there are two underground genera in the family too, but I have not seen either and will ignore them). I also looked false morels up in the newest asco book, *Nordic Macromycetes, Vol. I, Ascomycetes*, ed. L. Hansen and J. Knudsen (2000). It is European, but lots of ascos in particular are present in both Europe and North America. I bought it mainly to see how different the names are in more modern nomenclature (it has no pictures, and the descriptions are very concise). As Weber discusses, there has been lots of disagreement about where to put false morels (Seaver had most in *Helvella* in his day, and almost all of them have been in at least three genera, and several have multiple species names too). Weber follows the old-fashioned idea that one should separate genera on how they look to your eye, instead of how they look under a microscope: the disc-like ones are in *Discina*, and the stemmed ones with a distinct cap are in *Gyromitra*. That seems to be the way Europeans used to do it too. The Norwegian genus names are given in NM1 as *Flatmorkel* and *Hattmorkel* respectively. However, in NMI the species have been thoroughly scrambled because instead of using shape of the mushroom to make the distinction between genera, now we are supposed to use the shape of the spores. If the spores have raised extensions on the ends (apiculi) like

macrospora does, it is now a *Discina*. Surprisingly, in NM1 the more common mushroom in western Wisconsin that is always called false morel and is associated with deciduous trees, *Gyromitra fastigiata* in Weber, is equated with what is called *Gyromitra caroliniana* in Weber (Fries had it as a *Morchella*, Levelle as a *Mitrophora*, and Imai as a *Neogyromitra*) in a single *Discina* species. One can easily move species from one genus to another, and almost everybody who ever wrote a monograph including false morels has felt free to do so. However, equating these species cannot possibly be correct for the U.S.; *caroliniana* was described from the U.S., and is clearly different from *fastigiata* in the U.S.. NM1 also omits the considerable synonymy for this name in the U.S., including *brunnea* and *underwoodii*, that Weber decides are all the same thing. I have unfortunately never seen *caroliniana*, as it is only supposed to occur south of Wisconsin and Michigan, but several pictures show that the two could not reasonably be confused in the field. Apparently it is different for laboratory specimens (*caroliniana* is huge, and nobody is going to leave it whole to store). We usually find *fastigiata* near partly decayed rather large fallen logs, although the biggest group we ever saw was clustered around a large stump. We saw all too many *G. fastigiata* this spring. That is, too many compared to the paltry number of true morels we managed to stumble across; as on May 19th, when we found *fastigiata* in four places at Natural Bridge State Park in Sauk County, but no morels. I always like to find *fastigiata*, which is among the most striking mushrooms in the woods in May, and often comes two or three to the pound instead of twenty or thirty. Perhaps unfortunately, I refuse to eat it because it is known to contain poisonous hydrazine compounds. The amount of poison is alleged to vary widely. NMI also only includes *Discina gigas*, which they apparently accept as separate from the two species that Weber discusses replacing it in the U.S., *G. korfii* and *G. montana*, although others call them *gigas* in the U.S. too, and to close the ring of confusion, McKnight labels as *fastigiata* what Weber calls *korfii*. *G./D. korfii* is associated with pines and occurs in western Wisconsin; we have seen it in Grant and Sauk counties. It may be seen most easily on the dying pine trees on the right of the trail leading down along the bluff from the Green Cloud Hill picnic area at Wyalusing State Park. As Weber points out, the number to be seen in a given year is quite variable, but we have seen them here every year since we discovered them growing there. There were only a few this spring. NM1 limits *Gyromitra* to the smooth-spored species. Ones that occur in Wisconsin include *esculenta*, which grows north of where we usually look, but is widespread from LaCrosse to Manitowoc, Peck's species *sphaerospora*, which I unfortunately have yet to see, and *infula*, a fall species that often grows on exposed wood (the others usually appear to arise from soil) and is agreed to be the most poisonous of the lot.

RECIPE: BREADED MUSHROOMS

by John S. Komosa

1 medium size *Grifola*
2 eggs
milk
flour

margarine
oil
bread crumbs
salt & pepper

Clean the Grifola & separate into florets. Cook and drain. Soak the mushrooms in milk.

Mix the eggs with water and beat. Now dip the florets into flour, then into the egg batter, and then coat them with bread crumbs.

Fry in a combination of cooking oil and margarine until brown.

Serve while hot!!

p.s. Sulphur shelves or other mushrooms that are firm and thick could also be used.