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MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

"Another year down the tubes" or so I imagine the bolete collectors among us are saying. It has been a year of surprises with both a mushroom festival and a mushroom fair, and a picnic almost flooded out but well attended.

Sadly, the Milwaukee Public Museum's WMS Mushroom Fair has been put on hiatus for the upcoming year. Fourteen years in the running, it has offered much to our society, increasing our membership, sharpening our culinary and foraging skills, giving us speakers and guest chefs and authors throughout the years. Founded by Dr. Martyn Dibben and continued by Kevin Lyman of the Museum Botany Department, it is hoped that the event might return a few years down the road. Thanks to all those who have participated in the Mushroom Fair over the years and made it such a success.

Onward into the winter lectures. Perhaps El Nino will give us a mild winter (very slim chance) for our upcoming slideshow and wine-tasting mixer. Several lectures by some of our own members, a mushroom dinner in April and a morel foray in May will follow, culminating with a picnic at Falk Park on Sunday, June 28 (Saturdays were unavailable as in the past). So, even though winter is upon us, there is much mushrooming to look forward to. Have a great holiday season.

Bill Blank

UPCOMING WMS EVENTS

January 14: Members' slide show and contest (see note below), followed by wine cheese party

February 17: Slide-lecture by John Steinke on the “Fungal Diversity”

March 24: Slide-lecture by Janice Stiefel, nature photographer, on “Mushrooms, Mosses, Liverworts, Lichens, and Ferns”

April 16: Mushroom dinner at Heaven City Restaurant

May 16: Morel Foray in North Kettle Moraine

June 28: Annual meeting and picnic at Falk Park

SLIDE CONTEST

WMS is planning a new feature at the January slide show and mixer this year. Attending members will vote for the best slide and the person taking the winning slide will receive a free one-year membership in the WMS. Please bring a maximum of your 5 best slides to share with the group.

1998 DUES ARE DUE

Your annual Wisconsin Mycological Society membership dues are due once again. Members will receive a separate mailing for this. Please fill out the 1998 dues form that you receive and mail it back, along with your check, to John Steinke at the address given. WMS dues are \$15 for a single or family membership. If you are interested, annual dues for NAMA (North American Mycological Association) are an additional \$17. Also, be sure to complete and return the quiz that you receive for a chance to win a prize.

SEND US SOME STUFF

This is your newsletter. You are encouraged to contribute mycologically-related material — essays or anecdotes of your own composition, articles or clippings from other sources, or drawings or other artwork that you have created. President Bill Blank has set a good example by showing us his sense of humor with several pieces in this issue. Also, for the last several years we have been able to showcase members’ drawings on the cover of the newsletter. We also want to experiment with using photographs. Not many people draw, but many take good photos.

Send your contributions to: Colleen Vachuska, 440 North St., West Bend, WI 53090.

MAUTHE LAKE FORAY September 6, 1997

This was a beautiful day, perfect for picking mushrooms or going on a hike. To make it even better, the mushrooms actually cooperated. *Flammulina velutipes* (velvet-stems) were very abundant, growing on dead and dying elms. This is a nice edible for beginners to identify. Several other attractive species of mushrooms, such as *Paxillus atrotomentosus*, were found. Among them were the distinctive *Lepiota acutesquamosa* and also *Tricholomopsis rutilans*, which has a red-fibered cap and yellow gills, making for a unique and striking mushroom.

Armillaria calligata is a beautiful cinnamon-brown with brown fibrils (hairs) which give this mushroom a striped appearance. Its taste and odor can be quite variable. We don't regularly find this mushroom, but on this occasion, a large fruiting was located. Some of these specimens went home for the pot. They were very firm and had an agreeable flavor. The odor was strong at first but later diminished.

Boletes were abundant at this foray . Species found were *Fuscoboletinus aeruginascens*, *F. paluster*, *Tylopilus felleus*, *Suillus sphaerosporus*, *Suillus americanus*, *Leccinum scabrum*, *Leccinum aurantiacum*, *Boletus russellii*, and best of all, *Boletus edulis*. This was the largest fruiting of *Boletus edulis* I can remember. I think the number of specimens could have been seven, but I'm sure they were "ate."

Chuck Soden

PIKE LAKE FORAY September 20, 1997

With a chance of rain in the forecast and the temperature falling, Pike Lake didn't offer much to us mushroom pickers. The forest seemed devoid of any edible or inedible mushrooms. Unfortunately, this was the foray that preceded the UWW Wild Mushroom Festival. Nonetheless, the group of about 15 did come up with specimens for the event. Many thanks for the generosity of those who participated. The region around Pike Lake seemed to be in a drought-like weather pattern. The ground was moist from a recent rain, but the small plants that are usually abundant didn't form much of a thicket in the woods. A few honey mushrooms were picked, lots of *Laccaria ochropurpurea*, some *Lactarius* and a bird's nest fungi were found.

Bill Blank

WILD MUSHROOM FESTIVAL AT UW-WAUKESHA

Sunday, 21 September 1997, marked a celebration of wild mushrooms and many other fleshy fungi at UW-Waukesha. The event was co-sponsored by the University (Biology Department) and the Wisconsin Mycological Society. Thanks to the University there was free parking and admission as well as access to excellent new facilities. Pre-festival details were handled by Alan and Diana Parker, and a multitude of tasks on the day of the festival were well-covered by a very dedicated group of WMS members. I'm hesitant to list individuals because I'm certain I'll forget someone; those that made the day a great success can subject themselves to a healthy dose of self-praise.

The festival ran from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. with five half-hour mini-lectures by Steve Nelsen, John Steinke, and Alan Parker on edible fungi, morels, more edible fungi, and the diversity of fleshy fungi in the state. All lectures were well-attended and even required adding more chairs to the conference room where the lectures were held. The display of fresh specimens was impressive — a comment heard several times was "I had no idea there were so many different kinds of wild mushrooms." Attendees also enjoyed the morel display and the "mushroom postage stamps from around the world." The purpose of the festival was well served; a number of people went away with a much better understanding about the biology of wild mushrooms and other fungi.

Alan Parker

THE TOP TEN IMPOSSIBLE MUSHROOM-RELATED GIFTS by Bill Blank

- 10. A Christmas tree with truffles buried in the soil

- 9. Some moldy field guides that are sprouting black trumpet mushrooms
- 8. A great field knife; How about the one missing from the O.J. trial? Throw in the shoes too; but the gloves won't fit.
- 7. The picnic basket that Yogi and Booboo used in their TV show
- 6. A lifetime park sticker
- 5. A foray hosted by the cast of *Baywatch*
- 4. A sled with a team of huskies ... oops, sorry, wrong mush
- 3. Fossilized mushroom rocks
- 2. Fat free butter for sauteing the mushrooms
- 1. A hand-drawn map of your favorite morel spot suitable for framing

GREENBUSH FORAY September 27, 1997

This was the first time that the WMS met at the Greenbush Recreational Area trails. The area is highly glaciated with many kettles and hills. As such, it is a favorite spot for off-road bicyclists. The area is wooded with mixed hardwoods and a few areas of pine and cedar. The kettles provide quite a few microhabitats and often can store water during dry times.

The conditions for the foray were dry. We hadn't gotten a substantial rain in the area for several weeks and the ground and forest floor had a dry feel to it. Yet a suprising number of mushrooms were found. In general the fungi tended to be larger than usual and some of the best edibles seemed to be just a little too old to save. In the parking area was a dense scattering of *Coprinus comatus*. (All but one or two were deliquescing heavily.) The first two mushrooms found in quantity on the trails were *Hypomyces lactifluorum* (lobster) and *Laccaria ochropurpurea*. The *ochropurpurea* especially were large handsome specimens growing in the grass along the path — apparently of no interest to the frequent bicycle traffic. From the mycophagist's viewpoint, the best finds were large clumps of *Armillaria mellea* growing from rotting wood. These were large golden-yellow specimens which were for the most part insect-free. There was only one bolete found to my knowledge, a lovely medium-sized veiled yellow specimen called *Pulveroboletus ravenellii*. While quantities of *Hygrophorus russula* had been found previous years in this area by individuals, none were found on this foray, though three other *Hygrophorus* species (*conicus*, *eburneus* and *praetensis*) were found. Also notable was the complete absence of any *Amanitas* — not even a *muscaria*. In all, over 40 species of fungi were collected and identified (for the most part).

About two dozen WMS members attended this foray. The weather was comfortable. Everyone found some mushrooms and only one person got lost (and was later found). All and all, it was a good foray to an area which hopefully we can put into our lineup of foray sites to visit regularly.

Peter Vachuska

MUSHROOM FAIR

The 14th Annual Mushroom Fair was held on Sunday, October 5, at the Milwaukee Public Museum. After one year in

another location, this year the Fair was back on the second floor in Uhlein Hall. Activities were similar to those of past years, though there were more children's activities and no cooking demonstrations.

As was the case last year, we had to compete with nice weather and the Packers. The paid attendance at the Museum on this day was 458 this year, compared to 561 last year. Considering the attendance, the Fair went over well. It generated eight new memberships for the WMS.

The Midwest Mushroom Photographic Competition was also held again. Twenty competitors submitted 64 slides. This year's winners were from Illinois, Minnesota, and Wisconsin. The winner of the Frederick W. Hainer Trophy Award was WMS member Janice Stiefel (Plymouth, Wisconsin) with her shot entitled Velvet Foot. Congratulations goes out to WMS member Charles Fonaas. Charles won a total of 5 ribbons (1 in Division I, 1 in Division II, and 3 in Division III) in the competition this year.

I wish to thank the following people who volunteered their time and talent for this year's fair: Bill Blank, Ellie Catlin, Martyn Dibben, Tula Erskine, Chuck Fonaas, Chuck Soden, Colleen Vachuska, Peter Vachuska and any volunteer whose name I may have overlooked.

Kevin Lyman
Botany Department
Milwaukee Public Museum

QUESTIONABLE NOTES

While I was identifying mushrooms for the Mushroom Fair at the Museum, a young woman brought in a mushroom that was no doubt a stinkhorn egg. She insisted that it was growing in the crotch of a tree about shoulder height. Having identified golf balls, ear plugs, turkey dung and deer droppings all as possible mycology finds, I know you can sometimes be skeptical of the finds brought to you to i.d.. In this case, the spore must have had the proper environment to germinate and grow. Even a stinkhorn growing in a tree (probably trying to pass as an apple) shows that even Mother Nature will throw a curve to a dedicated mushroomer.

Chuck Soden

MYCOBRIEFS

Fungus helping eastern Wisconsin woodlands: A fungus is being used by the state Department of Natural Resources to help control the spread of gypsy moth caterpillars through eastern Wisconsin woodlands. Earlier this year, the DNR collected caterpillars from Michigan that had been killed by the fungus *Entomophaga maimaiga*. These insects, which still contained the fungus, were pulverized and mixed with soil. The mixture was then spread this fall at three dozen sites in 13 Wisconsin counties: Brown, Calumet, Door, Fond du Lac, Kewaunee, Manitowoc, Marinette, Milwaukee, Oconto, Outagamie, Ozaukee, Washington, and Waukesha. The fungal spores will overwinter and then attack the caterpillars as they emerge in the spring. The *Entomophaga maimaiga* has a very selective diet and is not harmful to other animals or humans. It has been used successfully in Japan and several Eastern states to control gypsy moth caterpillars. (Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel, Oct. 17, 1997)

Funny mushrooms in the Netherlands: The latest drug craze in the Netherlands is for mushrooms. In the last four years, about two hundred Dutch so-called "smart shops" with names like *Conscious Dreams* have begun selling mushrooms for "purposes other than putting in omelettes." The Dutch government is generally permissive about soft drugs, and marijuana is openly sold in coffee shops. But it is unsure as to what to do about the booming mushroom business. The most powerful mushrooms can be hallucinatory and have the same effect as weak LSD. Some

mushrooms that have been “processed” may contain substances that are illegal under Dutch law. Is drying mushrooms a form of processing? The Dutch Ministry of Health is planning to issue recommendations soon. (The Economist, November 8, 1997)

Burdsall receives honor: Hal Burdsall of the Forest Products Lab in Madison was recently presented the U.S.D.A. Forest Service’s Chief’s Superior Science Award, presented for “exceptional and sustained research productivity in biosystematics of forest fungi.” He was also recently elected as a Fellow of the International Academy of Wood Scientists for his contributions to the knowledge of wood-inhabiting fungi and their biosystematics. (Inoculum, newsletter of the Mycological Society of America, Dec. ’97)

Colleen Vachuska

THREE BITES FULL by Peter Vachuska

Many people who came to the mushroom fair this year were awed by my baggy wild mushroom pants. Well, now it’s possible for you to get your own. These are available though Chefwear USA, a company out of Chicago specializing in clothing for cooks. They have a very unique catalogue which is available free by calling 1-800-568-2433 or www.chefwearusa.com on the internet. The wild mushroom pants cost \$35 for 1-3 pair with discounts available for larger orders. Besides mushrooms they have many other interesting patterns and thier catalogue is certainly worth looking into by anyone with a flair for the unconventional.

Also for those with internet access, our website <http://www.geocities.com/Yosemite/Trails/7331/index.html> has been up and running for about six months now. It is a basic informational site with archives of our newsletters for the last five years, membership applications, photos, and a few other miscellaneous items. I encourage anyone out surfing the net to stop by briefly and if you have ideas for improvements, drop me a note.

Lastly, an informational note. In case you’ve been shut in for the last half year, there is a major new mushroom book out called *Mushrooms of Northeastern North America* by Bessette, Bessette and Fischer. (Wisconsin is in the range covered by this guide.) It has 1500 species and includes *keys to species!*, a feature that has been left out of many recent guides. The color photos are a little small, but that is a rather minor drawback. Prices are \$95 for hardcover and \$45 for paperback (plus \$4 shipping and handling). It can be ordered by mail by writing SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY PRESS, 1600 JAMESVILLE AVE., SYRACUSE NY 13244-5160 or over the telephone at 800-365-8929 (voice mail, orders only).

FIND THE FUNGUS by Bill Blank

Sometimes the names of mushrooms just pop right out of the conversation, even though we’re not talking about them. See if you can identify the fungus accidentally alluded to in each of the following situations. Answers are at the end.

- 1. Overheard at a travel agency concerning a possible jungle vacation: “Our malaria problem is a bit overstated.”
- 2. Around the campfire early in the morning in a John Wayne movie where Duke says “Well pilgrim, I guess I’ll just rustle us up some breakfast.”
- 3. Overheard at the White House concerning some missing documents: “Hilary, I’ve hid ’em where you won’t find them.”
- 4. Stupid Pet Tricks on a late night talk show was asked “Polly, pour us another glass of beer.”

5. From last Sunday's sermon: "But lead us not into temptation."
- 6. A quip from a movie goer: "These new horror films just can't thrill us like ole Frankenstein could."
- 7. On Wheel of Fortune, Pat says to Vanna: "We'd like one more 'L' if you please."
- 8. Last night at the poker game the loser commented: "What the hell fellas, it's only money."
- 9. From a Northern Exposure scene where the discussion is about the latest roadkill: "I might need a moose carrion after all."

Answers: 1. *Armillaria*, 2. *Russula*, 3. *Hydnum*, 4. *Polypore*, 5. *Boletus*, 6. *Cantherellus*, 7. *Morel*, 8. *Helvella*, 9. *muscaria*.

HEBELOMA RADICULOSUM AND MOLES by Steve Nelsen

I met Prof. Naohiko Sagara, who has "Professor of Mycology and World Web" on his business card, at Kyoto University. His specialty is the study of "fungi that sporulate or fruit restrictedly in forest sites where decomposition of urine, faeces or dead bodies (cadavers) has occurred". He lists *Rhopalomyces*, *Amblyosporium*, *Ascobolus*, *Tephrocycbe*, *Peziza*, *Coprinus*, *Crucispora*, and *Humaria* species which appear early in the succession, and *Hebeloma vinosophyllum*, *spoliatum*, *radiculosum* and an undescribed species; *Lactarius chrysorrheus*; *Laccaria bicolor*, *amethystina* and an undescribed species; *Lepista nuda*, *Suillus luteus* and *bovinus*; and a *Mitrula* spp. as appearing late in the cycle. He has shown that regular successions (covering at least three years) can also be stimulated by burying urea, aqueous ammonia solution, or other compounds that decompose to ammonia, in the woods. Looking at such successions would seem to be an interesting thing to try in the US too. This work is described in Can. J. Bot. 73 (Suppl. 1) S1423-33 (1995). Sagara has discovered that *Hebeloma radiculosum* (when identified correctly) apparently only grows near Kyoto on the latrine areas of old mole dens. When you find the mushroom, you have found a mole den, and can dig down and find the moles (or at least where they were; Sagara says it takes him about three days to excavate a mole den). He has also published on the moles, about which little was known because their dens are about a yard underground and several from the entrance, so they are difficult to locate otherwise. He was pleased that I had seen his plea for people to tell him when they find *H. radiculosum* that was published in Mycology magazine in the fall of 1995. He had had only one response by February of 1996, but was off to Sweden that summer (at his own expense) to see how closely related the mole species (whose den he was sure he could locate from the site where the mushroom was found) would be to the one he had been studying in the hills surrounding Kyoto. He has an interesting booklet for school children with lovely drawings and text in English and Japanese emphasizing the ecology of fungi, which he gave us permission to use.

RECIPE: GRANDMA'S RUTHENIAN MUSHROOM SOUP

The recipe below is excerpted from an article entitled "A Ruthenian Christmas" by Robb Walsh which appeared in the December '96 Natural History magazine. Ruthenians are an ethnic group living in the Carpathian Mountains of Poland, Ukraine, Slovakia, Romania, and Hungary. A traditional Christmas Eve dinner for them consists of 12 meatless dishes that are supposed to contain something from every aspect of nature. For example, some possibilities would be: fish from the water, cabbage from the garden, wheat bread from the fields, mushrooms from the forest, fruit from the orchard, and honey from the sky. The recipe below is from the author's grandmother and is the main dish of his family's Christmas Eve feast, *Svjata Ve cerja*.

- 2/3 cup dried wild mushrooms

- 1 cup chopped white mushrooms
- 1 small onion, chopped
- 3 tablespoons oil
- 1/4 cup carrots, diced
- 1/4 cup celery, diced
- 1 tablespoon barley
- 1/2 cup cooked white beans
- 1-1/2 tablespoons flour
- 1/2 teaspoon dried thyme
- 1/2 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1/2 teaspoon white pepper
- salt to taste
- 1/4 cup vinegar to taste

Simmer washed wild mushrooms in 5 cups of water for 30 minutes. Strain the mushrooms, chop coarsely, and return to the stock. Cook the onions and white mushrooms in 2 tablespoons of oil over low heat until browned.

Add the onions, white mushrooms, carrots, celery, and barley to the dried mushroom stock and cook until tender. Add the beans. Brown the flour in one tablespoon of oil and add the seasonings. Ladle a little of the mushroom broth into the browned flour and stir until dissolved. Add the mixture to the stock. Correct the seasonings and add salt and vinegar to taste. (Add lots of vinegar if you're a real Ruthenian.) Simmer for fifteen minutes and serve hot.

HAPPY MUSHROOMING IN 1998!

Here's a photo from the archives showing some of the membership going over the morning's fungal finds at a foray in Point Beach State Forest. Some of the people shown are (from right to left): Tula Erskine, Bill Blank, Irene Gutmanis, Ray Germonprez and Peter Vachuska. The photographer is unknown.

