

Next Meeting March 8th, 2004

SPORES Afield

The newsletter of the Colorado Mycological Society

March 2004

The President's Corner



GET READY FOR CHANGE!

One of the most attractive aspects of the Colorado Mycological Society organizational structure is that according to the CMS bylaws, the CMS officers can only hold office for one year. This gives more people the opportunity to lead, brings fresh ideas every year to the organization, and gives previous leaders a chance to have a break from various duties.

This year, as the new CMS president, my main goal is twofold: to increase attendance at monthly meetings and to attain a record number of members. The CMS bylaws state, "The purposes of the Society are to advance the understanding and to stimulate the interest of the members". I have several ideas that I believe would stimulate the interest of members. Here are a few for consideration:

- Make the monthly meetings more attractive. Perhaps we could have door prizes and offer better refreshments (I know my cookies only go so far!)

(continued on page 2)

Speakers for March meeting:

Who, What, Where, Why, When?

(No, this is not a lecture on journalism.)

All you ever wanted to know about mushrooms and more.

The March 8 program will be an open-ended discussion of favorite fungi, common or esoteric, delicious or deadly.

Several of our members will talk about their experiences with mushrooms and mushrooming. At deadline the following have volunteered to take part:

Vera Evenson - *Scutellinia scutellata*, the red eyelash cup

Chris Hardwick - *Lactarius deliciosus* and *L. olympianus*

Ed Lubow - matsutake

Bill Windsor - morels (Bet you could have guessed that!)

Marilyn Shaw - to be announced

We want you, too, to be involved. If you have a particular fungus friend that you would like spotlighted, please call Marilyn Shaw, 303-377-1278, to become a part of this panel. All members are asked to come prepared with questions and comments to make this an informative and fun evening.

Door Prize

Attend the March meeting and receive a number at the door for a chance to win!

Welcome to CMS!

This is the first issue for 2004 of *SporesAfield*, the newsletter of the Colorado Mycological Society. The purpose of this newsletter is to provide a forum for members to share experiences, information, and insight on mushrooms of Colorado and the Rocky Mountains.

The Colorado Mycological Society is a nonprofit corporation established in 1967 to advance the understanding of, and to stimulate interest in, the field of mycology. Our members collect specimens for identification, preservation and study. CMS is affiliated with the North American Mycological Association (NAMA). CMS provides consulting services to the Denver Botanic Gardens and the Rocky Mountain Poison Center.

Monthly Meetings

CMS meetings provide an informal opportunity to socialize and exchange information with others interested in mycology. Meetings are usually held the second Monday night of each month, from March through October, at 7:30 pm at the Denver Botanic Gardens, 1005 York Street, Denver, CO. The meetings are held in Mitchell Hall. There is no charge to get into the Botanic Gardens to attend the meetings. Members and visitors are welcome.

Authors, Artists, and Poets

The editor of *SporesAfield* needs your help. Please consider submitting an article, line drawing, digital photographs, a poem, editorial, comic, report on mushroom sightings, news items, announcements of upcoming events, or any other contributions to your newsletter. This is your chance to share with your fellow members. Send items by the 15th of each month to:

Norm Birchler
SporesAfield Editor
3266 Noble Ct.
Boulder, CO 80301
303-440-7123
onebwwd@aol.com

(Presidents Corner continued from page 1)

- Create a suggestion box and make index cards available at the meeting to generate ideas from the various members. (What would you like to see changed? Put it in the suggestion box and let us know!)
- Visit colleges and recruit new members from botany and chemistry classes.
- Make some of the volunteer positions yearly instead of ongoing if possible. Individuals may be more willing to take on available positions if they know they are only committed for a year. (For example, bringing refreshments, t-shirt & book sales, library, etc.) A second option is to divide the duties between several people and then people could cover just a few meetings at a time.

Of course all of these ideas will need to be reviewed by the board for approval before going forward. If you have any ideas that would bring people in and stimulate interest in mycology, please come to a meeting and let us know. Place your suggestion in the new suggestion box or send it to me via e-mail at:

cchardwick@capsandstems.com.

Let's pray for a bountiful harvest of fungi this year!

Spores Afield

Spores Afield is published from March through October by the Colorado Mycological Society. CMS dues are \$23 for the first year and \$20 thereafter. Send membership dues to CMS Membership Chair, Box 9621, Denver, CO 80209. All CMS members receive *Spores Afield* as part of their membership.

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

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

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Toxicology	Marilyn Shaw 303-377-1278 marihshaw@aol.com

Other Society Activities

Forays:

When the mushroom season gets going, mushroom forays are led by experienced members of CMS to different locations around the state. We usually hold forays on Saturday and Sunday. These forays are limited to members only. Forays are probably the best way to learn to recognize different kinds of mushrooms.

Classes:

Classes in beginning mushroom identification are offered periodically. CMS sometimes sponsors classes on growing edible mushrooms, mushroom photography and other subjects.

Mushroom Fair:

A mushroom fair is held each year in August at the Denver Botanic Gardens. August is the height of the mushroom season in Colorado, and members from around the state bring in a large variety of mushrooms for identification and display. The fair is open to the general public on Sunday. It is a great time to learn about mushrooms!

Resources:

The Colorado Mycological Society has an extensive library available to all members. Please contact Chris Hardwick 303-237-0356 to check out a book or to find out more about the collection.

Books For Sale:

We also offer a variety of books for sale at each meeting. The books are usually available to members at a discount.

CMS Website

CMS is on the World Wide Web at:
<http://www.cmsweb.org>. The website is full of information on the society's events, forays, and links to other sites in an easy to use format.

Long-time Member Passes Away

Word was received recently of the death of Rachel Grobel. Rachel had been a member of CMS for 20 years or more, and was a familiar figure on club forays. She probably knew better than any other member the location of every morel, oyster, cep, and chanterelle that raised its head in Colorado's woods and meadows, and kept family and friends well supplied with tasty morsels from her outings. Forays just won't be the same without Rachel.

Memorial contributions to CMS made in her honor now total \$205. This fund will be used in continuing the educational work of CMS.

Foray in Mexico:

While mushrooming season is still several months away for most, this winter period is a time when many fungi enthusiasts may be looking forward to forays in warmer days.

Your society's regular events will naturally be a priority for your members, but we would like to invite them, to also consider a most unusual mushrooming experience for 2004: one of our three special foray excursions in different regions of Mexico.

This is our fifth year of organizing memorable mushroom/travel adventures "south of the border" for small groups of "fungi aficionados with a taste for the exotic." Full information about these excursions is now posted on our website: www.mexmush.com but, as a brief synopsis, here are some essential details about our three, week-long mushrooming events for 2004:

1. The Copper Canyon Mushroom Expedition: August 15-22

Based in the breath-taking mountain countryside of the Tarahumara people of northern Mexico, this tour -- scheduled for the peak of the region's abundant fungi season -- includes a local mushroom festival, idyllic forest lodges and a journey

on the world-renowned Chihuahua-el Pacifico canyon-rim train ride.

Fee: US\$1,540 pp dbl. occ

2. The 5th Tlaxcala/Puebla Mushroom Foray: September 12-19

This treasure of forested, fungi-rich volcanic hills in Mexico's central highlands was the location of NAMA's acclaimed 1998 foray. Our fifth annual excursion here includes stays at historic haciendas, collecting with indigenous mushroomers, exposure to the enriching local culture and enjoying fine regional foods.

Fee: US\$1,1420 pp dbl. occ

3. The 2004 Veracruz Fungi Exploration October 10-17

This colorful, semi-tropical Gulf coast area, from seaside to high coffee/citrus-covered hills is home to more than 2,000 fungi species. Our foraying tour includes beach and plantation accommodations, archeology and marvelous seafood cuisine in several diverse areas of this beautiful state.

Fee: \$US1,480 pp dbl. occ.

Each 7-day excursion is all-inclusive (except for travel from home to/from tour starting point city in Mexico). It includes accommodations, meals, bilingual mycology expert guides, side trips and more.

The group size for each tour is limited to a maximum of 20, and bookings have often been filled (by participants from all over North America) early each year, so prompt contact is recommended for anyone interested. See full details on tours and activities on: www.mexmush.com

Tour organizers:

Erik Purre Portsmouth and Gundi Jeffrey*
(still -- but, since 1997, non-resident -- members of the Mycological Society of Toronto)

Apdo 73

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OOPS!

By Marilyn Shaw, Toxicology Chair, mycology consultant to RMPDC.

One evening last August the phone rang shortly after 10 PM. The Rocky Mountain Poison and Drug Center had a call holding - nothing unusual about that - but this was a conference call with one party in Boulder and another (part of a group) in Oaxaca, Mexico. Five people had gotten sick after each had eaten a small piece of a mushroom the day before. The Boulder patient had flown home the next morning.

His group had gone on a walk near Oaxaca with a local naturalist, and had come across some mushrooms in the woods. The guide told them this was a good edible mushroom, so each took a small piece and ate it. Raw.

About three hours later, one by one they began feeling ill - light-headed, stomach aches, headaches, and vomiting. At a local hospital they were given hydrocortisone shots, IVs, and four other drugs which the patients could not identify due to language differences.

By the next day all were feeling better, but not that great, and they were understandably concerned about the possibility of long-term effects.

The large mushrooms were growing in mixed woods. They were described as being orangish-red on top and having a thick layer of grayish "lines" underneath (pores). The flesh was white at first, but turned black when cut. Pretty surely a *Leccinum* sp. I assured them there would be no lasting effects.

Yes, *Leccinum* is generally believed to be edible, but every year I have cases involving this genus, cooked as well as raw. Reports have been received for at least 15 to 20 years, and not just in Colorado. Different species, based on habitat, coloration and staining, are involved. Often there are no specimens available, but people can remember enough details for a pretty good genus identification. This is not an "individual sensitivity" as my first cases were listed, since, as in

this case, several individuals, not all related, can be affected. Many of those who have become ill have been knowledgeable amateur mycologists, including officers in both CMS and in Pikes Peak Mycological Society.

Have I eaten them? Yes, but I have never thought they were that good. There is almost always something better around that I'd rather spend my time on. If you want to eat them, I have some advice - unsolicited, but inevitable. Eat them if you wish, but do not tell others to do so and don't serve them to friends as did a president of CMS many years ago. Her friends ended up not appreciating her hospitality.

And by the way, please bisect, top to bottom, any specimens you are going to eat and save one half, untrimmed, uncooked, wrapped in waxed paper in your refrigerator for me. Then, if you get sick you'll help advance mycological knowledge by providing a sample for identification.

Thanks in advance! Bon appetit!

Membership Dues are Due

If you have not paid you CMS dues for 2004, please pay as soon as possible. If you are not sure if you have already paid, check your membership expiration date in the upper right corner of the mailing label of this issue. To renew your membership, send a check for \$20 and a note to:

CMS Membership Chair
P.O. Box
Denver, CO 80209

(Note: New membership is \$23)

If you have any questions as to the accuracy of the expiration date on the label or change of address, please contact:

Linda deLeon
14310 W. Fifth Ave.
Golden, CO 80401-5226
ldeleon@attbi.com
303-278-9582

"First Timer"

By William Windsor

Do you remember your first time? No, no, not THAT! We're talking mushrooms here, the other 'forbidden fruit' of American culture. My first mushroom foray took place in Bavaria, Germany. I was 16 years old and my brother and I were embarking upon a bicycle tour through Europe. Leaving from New York's Kennedy Airport, we arrived in Munich and were met by our Aunt, Uncle and Cousins. Uncle Nick, my mother's brother, took us to a bicycle shop and helped us negotiate the purchase of a couple of touring bikes. With the bikes loaded on top of the car, we then drove to their home in the small town of Erding, south of Munich.

The next day we constructed the bikes and Aunt Anglia suggested that my cousins take my brother and I on a 'break-in' ride to a local forest to gather mushrooms. The ride was about twenty miles, ummm...32 kilometers, to a lovely Disneyesque forest. I was excited at the thought of gathering food from the forest.

As a boy I read many adventures of mountain men which had inspired in me a desire to learn how to survive in the woods. I joined the Boy Scout of America just to learn basic outdoor survival skills. The fact that the Scoutmaster's daughter was my first love may have had something to do with it as well. Ahhhhh first love, first kiss. Yes, dear reader, I digress, but the firsts in life are such magic, please allow me this moment of reflection.

Ok, I'm back, now where was I - oh yes...

The scouts taught me to trap fish and critters, make shelter and start fires, I never did find a class or merit badge for foraging. It's probably available through the BSA, I just did not come across it. I was actually more excited by the prospect of foraging for mushrooms than the fact that this was my first bicycle tour in Europe. My cousins, who thankfully spoke English better than I did, led us into the woods and introduced my brother and I to *Boletus* mushrooms. We gathered two types of mushrooms, what they called the

Rock Mushroom (*Boletus Edulis*) and the Butter Mushroom (which I believe may have been a *Suillus*).

I still remember how wonderful it was to find and gather the mushrooms in the beautiful woodland setting. We met several other families in the woods, also gathering mushrooms, and even then I realized that this was something special. The bicycle ride, woodland setting, the company of my cousins and the bounty of a wild food (and one so different than the mushrooms sold in the grocery stores at home!) combined to create a day that is still locked into my memory.

At the end of the day we returned to Erding and my Uncle carefully inspected our finds. I thought that we would eat the mushrooms for dinner, but that was not the case. Instead, the mushrooms were served for breakfast the following morning as a very simple dish of sauteed mushrooms served on buttered toast. Hmmmmmmm!

Upon returning to New York two months later, I did not continue with forays for mushrooms. As a young man my attention turned to girls, cars and motorcycles. Actually, girls, cars and motorcycles still capture my attention, but I've also embraced a few other interest over the years. It was almost twenty years after that first mushroom foray that I experienced my next mushrooming 'first'.

Like many laymen, I came to mycology through my stomach. It was a desire to obtain wild mushrooms to grace my dinner plate that led to my first solo mushroom foray. My travels through Europe had left me with a taste for wild mushrooms, and in particular a taste for morels. At that time, the cost of morels was quite high and one day when I was a 'Thirty Something' corporate manager, I decided that it would be fun and economical to find them on my own. Through my work I had 'banked' a huge amount of frequent flyer miles and the ability to take a vacation wherever and whenever I pleased.

I contacted the information hot-line at the University of Arizona with a simple question; "Where and when do Morel Mushrooms grow in the United States?" Three hours later I was
(continued on page 7)

(First continued from page 6)

called with the following response; “Uhhh, (pause) we found that the town of Mesick Michigan has a Morel Festival every May”. That was all the information I needed. I called information for a phone number of any hotel in Mesick, and within a few minutes was speaking with the proprietor of the only hotel in Mesick. It turned out he was familiar with morel mushrooms and was an avid 'shroomer'. I booked a room with him for five days on the following basis; the morning after his first find of morels, he would call me collect and I would fly into Travers City (the nearest town with an Airport) that same day. We kept this arrangement for 4 years.

On my first trip, I knew nothing about morels other than what dried specimen looked like. The proprietor gave me a couple of areas to check out and I purchased a topographic map of the area. After two days hunting I had not found any morels. I would come across people with baskets full of morels and ask for help. Explaining that I had traveled nearly two thousand miles to hunt morels, I begged for any tips on finding them. I was given many directions and tips, and not a single one helped. By day four I still had not found a single morel. This is when I came to my first morel enlightenment. “During morel season, everybody lies regarding where they find morels.” That morning, I went to a bookstore and purchased “The Curious Morel” by Larry Lonik. I read that in Michigan, morels are associated with Ash Trees. Now all I had to do was figure out what an Ash Tree looked like.

Back in the forest I came upon a sweet looking little old lady carrying a basket full of morels. “Excuse me,” I asked in the kindest most non-threatening voice I could muster, “I have come all the way from the state of Arizona to hunt for morels. Could you tell me which one of these trees is an Ash Tree?” “Oh gosh!” she responded, “I don’t think there are any Ash Trees in this forest.” “Then could you tell me where or how you found those morels?” I asked indicating to her basket. “Oh those,” she said while pulling on a terry cloth napkin to cover them from my

view, “I just came across these here and there, but not here really, more from there, down the road some.” Ah-ha! I thought to myself, my first real clue! Since I now knew that ‘everyone lies during morel season’, I figured I must be in good hunting territory.

I slowly walked a small valley between hills scanning the forest floor. After about an hour, I came upon the first wild morel I ever found. YES! YES! YES!, it was definitely a morel and LOOK!, there are two more! I picked the morels and then studied the area, paying particular attention to the nearby tree. I walked the area some more and about ten minutes later came across another morel. This one also had a few siblings nearby. Again I studied the area and the tree they were under. It was the same kind of tree as the first morel. “Mr. Ash I assume” I said out loud. I now changed my search pattern to first locate the correct tree, then search beneath it from Ash Tree to Ash Tree. In this forest, about one in thirty trees yielded morels and at the end of the day I had about two dozen morels. Considering the cost of airfare, car rental, meals and lodging, this was not exactly the cost savings I originally envisioned. Still, I was ‘hooked’ and I have hunted morels every spring from that year forward.

After several years of hunting morels, my next mushrooming ‘first’ was expanding on my quarry. I purchased several field guides and books on mushroom identification and chose boletus and chanterelles as two easy-to-identify mushrooms to add to my forays. To my amazement and delight, the mountains of Arizona yielded a rich bounty of mushrooms. Little-by-little, I taught myself how to identify a fair number of different mushrooms. I also found my interest in mushrooms growing and in 1996 I experienced another mushrooming first; I joined the Arizona Mushroom Club, my first mycological society. Moving to Boulder, Colorado in 1999, I immediately joined the Colorado Mycological Society and have been an avid member ever since.

Provided the cycles of Ganya, favor us with spring rains, morels will soon fruit for the first time from their hidden web of underground

mycelium.

I look forward to my 'first' foray of spring and the 'first' yellow morels to be found along the creeks in the flatlands. Later I will chase the 'first' black morels in the mountains. With a little luck I will find 'first' pleurotus, 'first' agaricus, 'first' boletus, 'first' chantharellus, 'first' auriculariales and 'first' tricholoma, all to eventually grace my dinner plate.

At 50 years young, I continue to be a 'work in progress' gathering a life-time of 'first' experiences and realizations. To the extent that I can keep my head clear, I am a perpetual 'first-timer'. To see the world with the open eyes-heart-mind of a 'first-timer' is one of the 'secrets' of life, hidden in plain sight. Every moment should be a 'first' moment as the wonder of existence is constantly revealed to us.

Happy and wonderful 'first' forays and 'first' experiences to you all.

Spores Afield

Page 8



March 2004

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