



Symbiosis[©]

The newsletter of the Prairie States Mushroom Club

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Fall

<http://iowamushroom.org>

Looking Forward

by Glen Schwartzlen Schwartz

So far this year, our forays have been reasonably well attended. Some, like the foray at Starr's Cave near Burlington, had a large crowd, while others were just a handful of PSMC members. The actual mushrooming this year has been consistently good, with one exception. The morel season this spring here in eastern Iowa was awful. Just as the morels were starting to come up, we had a week of 40 degree weather with a lot of rain. The cold rain stopped any more morels from emerging, so the season was cut short.

Overall, eastern Iowa has had good rainfall about once a week, for near perfect mushroom hunting (except, of course, during morel season, grrr). Not so out west. The foray at Ledges State Park near Boone was quite dry, but we did find a modest amount of fungi deep in the gullies. Unfortunately, south central Iowa has been very dry, so the 2 day foray at Sibylla Brown's farm and Nine Eagles State Park have been cancelled. Bummer. I was looking forward to hunting Boletes in the oak savanna.

I have not been out in the woods as much this year as I had been in past years. It just seems like I am always too busy, what with gardening, training for RAGBRAI, home repair, visiting my daughter in Illinois, etc. Thus, regrettably, I find that I do not have time this year to create a mushroom calendar. Only a few members sold any calendars the last few years, so it began to feel like I was making the calendar for myself, not for the club. I will be happy to help someone else create a calendar next year if anyone is interested.

Don't forget, our annual meeting is scheduled for October 15th at the Wickiup Nature Center near Cedar Rapids. As normal at the annual meeting, we will be electing PSMC officers for the next calendar year. All positions are open

The Dead Elm Treat

by Dave Layton

I suppose you noticed that there are lots of dead elms around Iowa. When they're too dead to support morels several other mushrooms grow on them in Spring, Summer, and Fall. Most common among those are dryads (*Polyporus squamosus*) ear fungus (*Auricula aricularia*) and recently yellow oyster (*Pleurotus citrinopileatus*).

The other day I found fresh yellow oyster and ear fungus on the same dead elm tree. A little further down the trail I found a tender young dryad. All together they would make a nice addition to a meal. However I've always been leery about mixing dryads with other mushrooms. Yellow oysters have a strong flavor that can mess up mixed mushrooms too. Ear fungus have a light flavor that can go with anything, as long as it's already okay tasting. My solution was to add the mushrooms consecutively to a sauté each with their own flavor enhancer and it worked! Here's what I did:

I cut the dryad into small chunks and sautéed in butter with a little Heinz chili sauce (one might experiment with A1 and ketchup etc.) This took a few minutes until the aromas of sauce and mushrooms mingled. Then I heated a little more butter and olive oil and threw in the yellow oysters with a little white wine and cooked till the liquid came out and started to steam off. I moved the mushrooms to the rim of the pan and added a teaspoon or so of soy sauce to the remaining juice in the center. I added the ear fungus to that hot liquid and sautéed for a few more minutes and stirred all mushrooms together. The result was a side that went great with potatoes and onions. I believed it can be used anywhere you like wild mushrooms. We felt there was a real synergy between the different flavors. That seemed especially appropriate since all 3 species like the same kind of tree, and, did I mention? There are lots of dead elms around Iowa. 

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Fungi Fun From Sphagnum to Sand by Linda Scarth

This is to suggest that fungi photographers look for mushrooms and other fungi in all environments beyond woodlands and grasslands. We sometimes are surprised by the places we find them.

In June we were in an arctic bog in northern Maine with many bog plants – cotton grass, pitcher plants, sundew, and baked apple berries, etc. I was trying to get examples of as many as I could. Bob was concentrating on pitcher plants and sundew.

As I walked along the boardwalk, I spotted a smooth, light-colored blob among the rough textured sphagnum moss that was the underpinning of all the plants in the bog. When I came parallel to it, it turned into a small mushroom. The green contrast is baked apple berry leaves. I have since learned that there are several mushroom species that like to live in acidic bogs. This one is still unidentified.

Several years ago we were walking on a beach on Calvert Island off the coast of British Columbia. We were on the island hoping to see crab-eating wolves. All we saw were footprints on the beach. It was foggy and blowing when beside a large piece of driftwood was lovely russet mushroom sprinkled with sand warmed the day. It was just yards from the pounding surf of the Pacific Ocean. Why did its spore flourish in this inhospitable place? It too was worth a photo even without a name.

Wherever you go, there might be a lovely mushroom. Or if not particularly pretty, it might be in a photogenic setting. Take your photo and remember where you were. 



Orange Hats

by Glen Schwartz

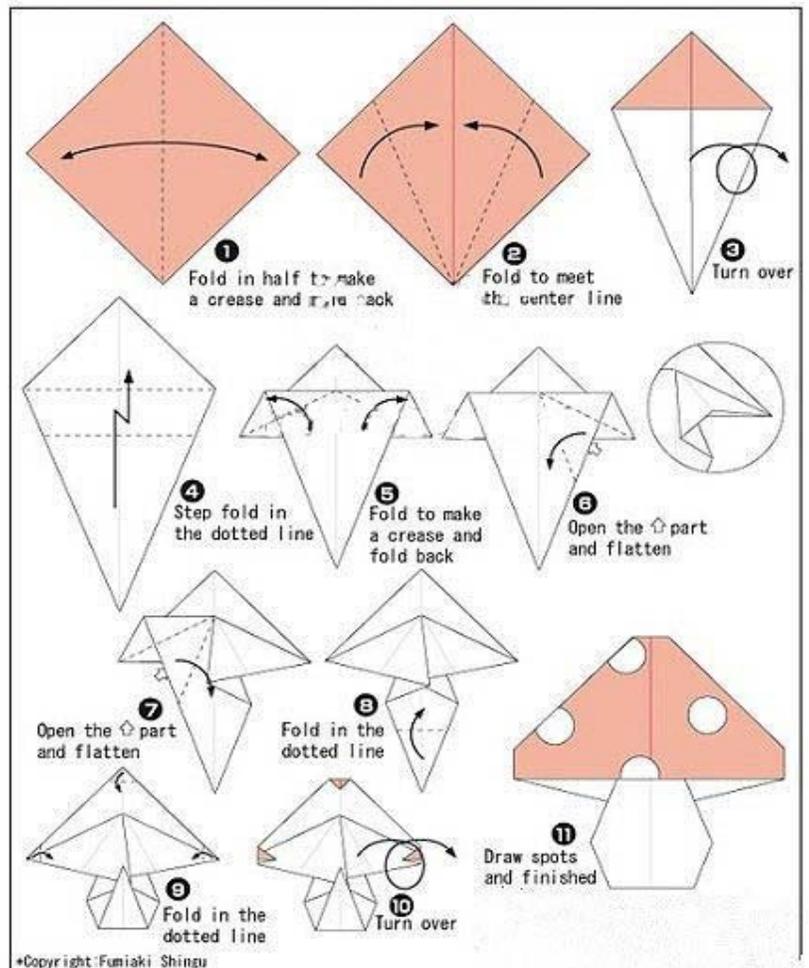
Karen asked recently about the origin of the orange hats that some of us wear. I would like to tell you about a great and exciting story, but, alas, it is kinda boring.

One of our favorite mushroom hunting locations is the Wickiup Natural Area. Amongst ourselves, we often refer to this as Wickiup North as it is north of the Wickiup Learning Center. Hunting is allowed in the Wickiup Natural Area, so it is important to be visible. An orange hat is one of the best ways to be seen by a hunter. We often have our heads down looking for ‘shrooms, so we might walk past a hunter and not even know they are there, but we hope that he or she sees us.

A few years ago, I just happened to notice that several of the PSMC members were wearing orange hats at the start of a foray. Since then, I have encouraged all of our members to wear an orange hat as a way to signify that we are “experts”. When we have a foray with a large number of non-members, it makes it convenient to tell everyone, “Just look for an orange hat – they can help identify the mushrooms that you just found.”

As for my orange hat... Several years ago, Roger and I were snowshoeing in the Wickiup Natural Area, and I spotted an orange object. It turned out to be a ball cap from Theisen’s. It looked new, so I decided to take it. It wasn’t until later that I thought, “Hmm, I hope the previous owner did not have lice or fleas”, but by then, I had worn the hat many times. I am happy to report no fleas or lice from my found orange hat. 

Origami Mushroom Craft



The Mushroom Tourist

by Dave Layton

I scout for mushrooms everywhere I go. If there's a patch of grass or a likely tree and the ground's not frozen, I keep an eye out. Usually that's eastern Iowa and western Illinois, but occasionally I get to be a tourist, a mushroom tourist. This summer I got to be a mushroom tourist in the Adirondack and Green mountains and the Susquehanna River valley near York, PA. I got to visit dozens of grassy patches and thousands of likely trees. All of those places had been pretty dry but the mountains still yielded more and different fungi than I was familiar with. It was kind of like a macro-sightseeing tour.



Scanning for possible mushroom forest from Mt. Goodnow firetower, Adirondacks. It appears there are thousands of square miles of nothing but mushroom forests, and water. Photo by: Dave Layton

Our first mushroom walk was at Green Lake State Park near Syracuse with my 28 year-old son Will. There weren't a lot of mushrooms, but there were lots of young people wandering around the trails looking for something. He showed me what they were looking for by quickly capturing a Pokey-ball. Despite my derision he managed to explain what sounded like kind of a fun game. Of course I was already on my own sort of scavenger hunt requiring no imaginary balls. However, it made me wonder about a Mushroom Wars game app which could marry an app to photograph, key, and document wild mushrooms with a competition or battle using powers ascribed to different mushrooms documented. The best part is the game could be played without ever actually touching the mushrooms. Meanwhile GPS could ascribe an exact time and place to the mushrooms documented and add them to regional herbariums - hmm. We never did find mushrooms in Syracuse but Will found us some wonderful trout.

Our first hike in the Adirondacks on Bald Mountain trail quickly yielded a variety of *Russula*, *Lactarius*, boletes and *Amanita* - mostly harmless *vaginata* relatives. We collected green *Russula aeruginea* for our meal that night in our efficiency unit at the Shamrock resort in Long Lake (a great place to stay!). One large mature specimen (amazingly worm free) had a slight hot pepper taste, but younger ones didn't.

A more interesting aspect of that first hike for me was the way we quickly drew company. Sally noticed a young couple examining a mushroom and asked if they were looking for mushrooms. The young woman showed Sally the mushroom tattoo on her calf and said she loved mushrooms but didn't know much about them. Sally invited the couple to walk with us. I suspect she was just hoping to find someone interested in my ongoing babble about every different species I came across. It turned out she was right. They actually seemed to appreciate the Mushroom 101 lesson.

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The Mushroom Tourist

(cont. from pg. 4)

It was fitting that 2 large boletes were right outside our cabin at the Shamrock. Unfortunately they were too far gone to identify so we watched them grow a lovely cobwebby mold for 2 days. The Shamrock property had a short nature trail that we walked on early in the morning. There we found more *Russula* including some large mild tasting yellowish tan ones that joined our breakfast along with some delightful *Suillus pictus* which I'd never found before. Unfortunately all the ring perch I caught off the dock were too small to participate. It's interesting to note that the tourist trap general store in Long Lake had 4 different mushroom books including a folksy book on edibles which I had to purchase. It was actually from Scandinavia. Hmm - folksy, local mushroom travelogs for mushroom tourists could be a hit.

At this point I must discuss my eating of new mushrooms. With *Russulas* I smell first, then, if they don't stink, I taste a little raw. If nothing bad happens to my tongue, I harvest

any that don't have worms. Finally, I cook a couple bites in the microwave plain. If only pleasant smells and flavors emerge, I add that species to the meal, even if not certain what species it is. *Russula* is the only genus I take this liberty with. I believe these were a variety of *xerampelina* or *olivacea*. I tested the *Suillus* the same way though I was certain of its identity from the book I had with me. The good news for me was that it didn't give me dermatitis the way our local slippery caps do.

On our way to Vermont, a hike up to the fire-tower at Mt. Goodnow yielded a nice clump of *Hericium* and oyster mushrooms which we saved for dinner with Sally's family in Vermont. Incidentally the view from the fire-tower was fantastic. Finally I got a brief respite from my constant mushroom vigil - on the ferry crossing Lake Champlain. It wouldn't last long though. Sally's brother Bob and his wife Sue live in a nice country home on a mountain in rural Vermont completely surrounded by likely mushroom trees!



Some mushrooms from Adirondack and Green Mountains

from top left: *Russula vinosa* or *varieta?* *Russula aeruginea*, Reishi

2nd Row: Lobster, Unknown *russula*, *Amanita flavoconia* (small above *russula*), *Amanita jacksonii*, unknown and unwholesome white mushroom.

3rd row: Chanterelles, oysters, *Hericium americanum*, *Clavivcorona pyxidata*, uncertain *Tylophilus* and *Boletus*

Photo by Dave Layton

(cont. on pg. 6)

The Mushroom Tourist Looking Forward

(cont. from pg. 5)

Within an hour the conversation turned to, “We have some weird mushrooms at the foot of our lane, but I can’t imagine they’d be good to eat.” They turned out to be tasty lobster mushrooms which joined more russulas and chanterelles along with the *Hericium* and oyster mushrooms for a cookout that evening. I cooked the different mushroom species each in their own packet so everyone could tell the different flavors. All were eaten—without incident.

I confess that I ate one mushroom no one else did. It was an unmistakable Caesar’s amanita (*Amanita jacksonii*.) I’d never seen one of these before but I recognized it in a heartbeat. However, there was no way I could invite others to eat this mushroom after I’d just informed them that Amanita is a genus to avoid entirely. This is a beautiful edible mushroom I’ve wanted to find my whole life. It turns out that I’m glad I didn’t share it with others. It was nowhere near as tasty as all the other mushrooms we were having. Finally I have no desire to eat any Amanita.

That’s really all of the fungal part of our trip. There were lots of Amanitas, Russulas and bitter boletes (*Tylopilus felleus*) at the park where we picnicked along the Susquehanna with Sally’s sister and family but nothing unusual or edible. We actually ate a meal that didn’t include mushrooms. We were probably due for that anyway. On the drive home we had to settle for beautiful scenery and one more delightful visit with grandkids. Okay maybe mushrooms were only a minor part of a trip filled with swimming, canoeing, hiking and fun visits with family, but I like to think of the mushrooms as the frosting on the cake. 



Amanita jacksonii closeup

Photo by Dave Layton

(cont. from cover)

every year, so nominate someone or volunteer yourself for club officer. More details will be sent out soon. For a program this year, I thought that I would show how to navigate the SmugMug website. About a year ago, they forced us to use their new format. At first I did not like it as much, but now I think that it is OK.

See you in the woods. Glen

PSMC Annual Meeting

Saturday, October 15th 10:00 am - noon
Wickiup Nature Center, Linn Co. Iowa 



The Puddle Dance by Margaret Tarrant
sprites & pixies

Mushroom Hunting

Here is something fun to keep our mushroom eyes on their A game. Can you find the mushroom, living or non-living?



Kitchen window sill photo by Karen Yakovich



These guys think they're hiding.



Photo of Sheila by Carolyn Shuff

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Picture above: Next time I come across one of these I'm going to write "PSMC" instead of "I heart Steve".

Picture below: A nice coral fungus.

