



*Underwoodia columnaris* was found on June 12th at Brushy Creek State Park foray in a size and abundance never before documented. This gave us a chance to add to the overall body of knowledge about this rare mushroom. Dean Abel did background research and Roger Heidt took photos of both fruiting bodies and spores. According to Dean:

The find of *Underwoodia columnaris* gets better and better. This mushroom is an ascomycete related to the *Helvella*s (it looks like a giant *Helvella crispa* without a cap).

1981 pictures this mushroom attributed to photographer Arne Bendon. Bessette et al. are used again in *Mushrooms of Northeastern North America* 1997. This must be a hard fungus to find. I note that several authors appear to simply repeat the description of earlier writers. The mushroom is reported over and over as being up to 4 inches (8-10 cm) in height. In our collection the biggest specimen is over 8 inches (20 cm) in height. Roger and I will attempt to dry our specimens for posterity. This was truly a great find!

We were split into two groups, both of which found over a dozen large specimens scattered over a hillside of secondary growth woods. Most were on bare soil beneath a dense canopy of linden, ash, elm, locust and similar trees. There had been excessive rain, which I believe caused these to continue growing and swell in size. It may also have drowned out competitors.

At their base they had a pleasant mushroomy smell similar to other cup fungi that are edible. I might have been tempted to test their edibility, but I wouldn't have wanted this article to state, *"They were edible and tasty – every last one of them."*

It's possible that Roger has the first actual photos of spores. The spore photo plus photos of these mushrooms by Roger, Dean and Glen Schwartz appear to more than double the known archive of *Underwoodia* photos. All of their photos can be found by clicking the SmugMug link, then going to the foray 2010 folder and click on Brushy Creek.

This extraordinary mushroom find underscores the value of PSMC membership and group forays to me. Even if I had been at the right time and place myself, two other members of the group, typically, asked if that wasn't some kind of large mushroom that I just walked by. More complete information about this rare mushroom find will be found in the upcoming issue of Symbiosis.