



SPORE-ADDICT TIMES

PIKES PEAK MYCOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF COLORADO SPRINGS JULY 1988 NEWSLETTER



The July meeting will take place on Monday, the 25th in the new meeting room 118 (downstairs) of Colorado College Worner Center. The meeting begins informally at 7. At the last meeting, there were more mushrooms brought in for identification than are normally found on a foray! We had three table tops covered! There was however, an obvious dearth of edibles. Many of the specimens were found within a few blocks of the meeting center. Do continue to bring in your findings. Try very hard to make a spore print for each specimen type and do try to make at least a tentative identification. The real value in this process is the learning that occurs when identification is attempted. I can state from personal experience that not much is gained when someone else says "oh, that's a _____." Going through the exercise of keying out a collection involves becoming familiar with the language of taxonomy, being able to describe salient macroscopic features and distinguish them. Through this process, one learns not only what the specimen is, but also much about what it is not (in terms of characteristics of other species/genera).

Our president was instrumental at the June meeting in causing the formation of several study groups. The plan is for these groups to meet outside of the monthly meeting time, study to develop their understanding of the chosen field of specialization and present a brief tutorial to the membership at the regular meeting. This could be in the form of real specimens with identification and the basis thereof. Do consider joining one of the listed groups, just give your name to Dirk at the next meeting, or start one of your own. There follows the current group memberships:

RUSSULA....Dirk Baay, Frieda Davis, Dennis Craig

* LACTARIUS..Dennis Craig, Lee Barzee, George Singer, Noel Damon, Annette Campbell, Bill & Mary Will, Viola Garrett *Bea Lyon*

BOLETUS....Doris Bennett, Mike & Jean Chladek, Jack and Sue Richards, Lori Ligon, Pat Gustavson, Dorothy & Ed Malew

The program for the upcoming meeting, our President tells me, will consist of presentations and discussions as prepared by the above committees. Let us hope that they have been active.

Speaking of the last meeting, Ray Acciardi was elected as our new VP and takes over for Bob Worden who has moved. Ray, to celebrate (and perhaps start a fine tradition), brought in for our tasting and enjoyment a 6-pack of his homebrewed ginger ale...an excellent recipe!! What would he do if we elected him Pres.?

This year the annual Telluride Mushroom Conference will be held on August 25th to 28th. As usual, there will be courses in identification, cultivation, legal aspects of "mushroom tastings," daily forays and more. Information may be obtained from Fungophile, P.O. Box 5503, Denver, CO. 80217-5503. One can also obtain information by phone at (303) 296-9359.

Well the hoped-for July rains have come. We have been blessed with afternoon showers for many of the days this month with predictable results. Recent forays have been producing excellent collecting, quite a number of species and an abundance of edibles. The foray on the 2nd to Emerald Valley and Mt. Rosa did not produce much for the pot, and not large quantities were found, but many species were collected. The foray the following weekend to the Crags was lightly attended, but the collecting was quite good. Frieda found quite a few morels and other edibles such as *deliciosus* and *Leccinum* a.. The foray on the 16th to the Wet Mountains was very well attended and before the afternoon thunderstorm, almost everyone had gathered a large bag of *P. edulis*. Dennis, who directed the foray, stopped at lunch time and cooked up batches of boletes and *deliciosus*. His own touch was the touch of ginger he added to the sauteed delicacies.

Although our morel season is about at an end, despite the fact that they still seem to be found here and there, George Davis presented me with a copy of a publication containing an article on morels, and I thought that some of it might prove of interest. Here in Colorado we don't see the bounty that our mid-west and eastern associates find in Spring. There, thousands and thousands of collectors scour the forest floor in search of these delectables, despite the fact that the prizes are not credited with any nutritional value. The flavor is described as "woodsey" or "mushroomy" but unlike any other. There is a great feeling of pride in finding these elusive gems, since they seem so hard to see, even when staring right at one. Even when pointed out they may be hard to see unless one has developed an "eye." I can say this from personal experience since I am myself often blind to their presence.

There is also a feeling of wealth upon collecting morels, since they sell in such places as New York specialty stores for as much as \$12 an ounce in dried form. The "lumpers" and "splitters" are still trying to decide whether there are but a few species or dozens, since it can come in so many sizes and colors. The technical aspects of the fungus are of far less importance to the majority of seekers than the flavor. In May, about 4000 mushroomers gather in Muscoda, Wisconsin for the annual Morel Festival. Prizes are given for the gatherer of the tallest, widest, oddest, heaviest and biggest cluster. For those who are failures in the field, the town offers morels for sale at about \$6 per pound fresh. Many people take advantage of this service. Experienced morel finders claim that an inexperienced collector is easy to spot since he is often looking on the wrong side of the hill. The recommendation is to search uphill so that the mushrooms are closer to eye level. They suggest that south slopes are best early in the season since the ground warms there first. The natural progression is south to west to north to east. It is stated that in this part of the country, a good place to look is under spruce, cedar or poplar. It is also believed that burned over or disturbed land is also good. After World War II, devastated areas of Europe produced record crops.

In this country, the most common species is *Morchella esculenta*, with *M. angusticeps* second. This latter is the black morel, slightly earlier, smaller and more flavorful. For the total amateur, there is the danger of collecting the false morel which contains the toxin monomethyl-hydrazine. Not all people react to small doses of this toxin, and some people take advantage of a "safety zone" to eat the imposter. In severe cases of poisoning, death can be the result.

A recent patent in June of 1986 by Neogen, an agricultural biotec company in Lansing, Michigan promises morel cultivation all year long. The