

Spore-Addict Times

The Newsletter of the Pikes Peak Mycological Society

May 1991

While you're about mushrooming

by Lee Barzee

Many detective-type folks look for clues to finding their favorite mushrooms by habitats, not just by convenient road or contour maps. The focus of the spring meeting of the Colorado Mycological Society was "Identification of Trees and Who Their Friends Are." So too, our PPMS members can spruce up (no pun intended) with a review of tree and shrub identification and apply the knowledge to find mushroom associates.

Now the season is young, and trees are in early developmental stages. Some flowering plants may sprout blossoms before leaves; some may show last fall's fruits more plainly than their new growth. Others may be just bursting with both fresh little leaves and colorful flowering parts. But would you believe many folks simply don't notice these other plants when they're mushrooming?

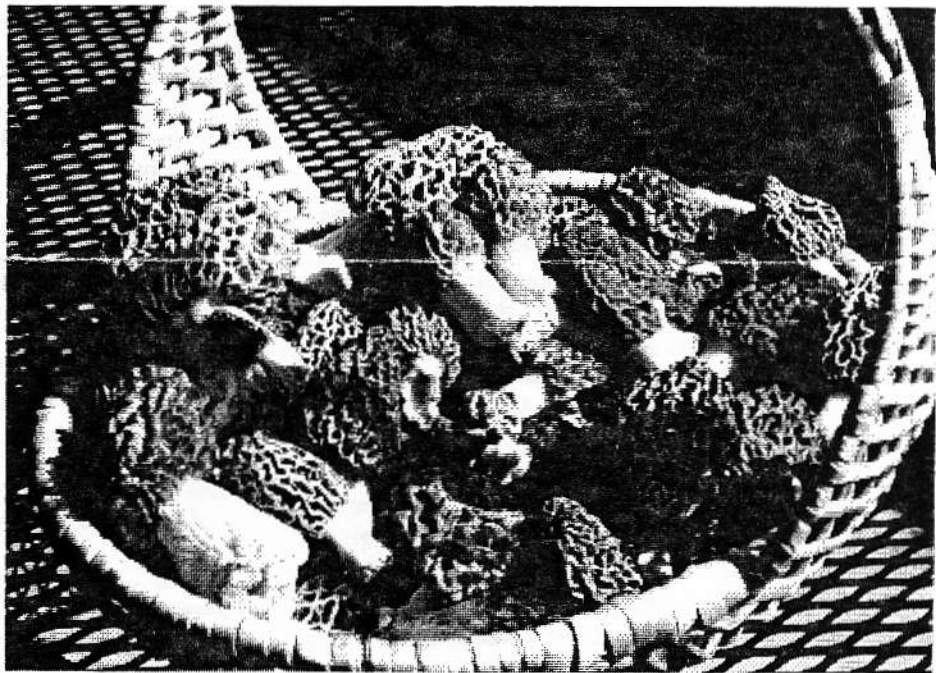
What about the mysterious morels? Touted in all the journals, May is the month for them. Labeled the "Universal Mushroom" by one writer, Raymond Sokolov ("The Universal Mushroom," *Natural History*, December 90), whose interests are the history and preparation of food, they seem to be everywhere. His recipes sound great, but where are the raw ingredients—morels?

We, of PPMS, traditionally aim at a morel foray. Let's think of habitats of morels, however precisely secret, as clues to where they live. My spring morels were

found in ground covered by old aspen leaves. Aspen in our area are accessible and well known. Others look for clues of cottonwoods or even apple trees to lead them to their prize. So, we foray further... but, detectives, what other plants do you recognize around your mushroom habitat? One you should know is poison ivy. Don't laugh! A certain club member won't.

Poison ivy is not as difficult to find as morels are. Its genus name, *Toxicodendron* would be a clue, of course, if it wore a name tag. "Toxico-" means poisonous, and "dendron" means branches or fingers. Its habitat is frequently shared by people—often oblivious people—looking for mushrooms. (Oblivious people may also get lost, but that's another story.) This plant is found in "gulches, hillsides on mesas and lower foothills, spreading into picnic areas," says Dr. William. A. Weber in *Rocky Mountain Flora* (Colorado Associated University Press, 1976). It seems to have an affinity for disturbed areas, as picnic grounds, trampled streambanks, and trailsides.

In summer, poison ivy is readily recognized by its



The satisfying results of Dennis Craig's efforts last year. (Photo by Lee Barzee.)

While you're out, continued

shiny three leaflets and often vine-like habit. But in springtime in the Rockies, this plant may be somewhat hard to spot. Described in a botanical key as a woody dicot, it does look like the little shrub that it is. The erect bouquet-like fruits are pale greenish-white, presented as a terminal cluster—a rather attractive bunch on a stiff stem. Birds like the fruits for food during winter.

Nearly ubiquitous from Canada to Mexico and east to west coast, the effect of poison ivy contact has been known since the days of Captain John Smith and variously described in primitive Indian cultures. Certainly the extreme dermatitis produced by the resinous oils in the leaves is familiar to most of us—and may encourage fantastic tales at the campsite! Actually, according to John M. Kingsbury in *Poisonous Plants of the United States*, only about half the human population is sensitive to an average contact with the poison. It is really an allergenic reaction rather than a poison.

All of the poison ivy plant is toxic *all* year. The good news is that it is physical contact with the poi-

Poison ivy is not as difficult to find as morels are.

sonous exudate that causes the problem. Dr. Kingsbury, professor of botany and phytotoxicology at Cornell University says, "there is no evidence that unbroken leaves or stems give off any poison." It is true though, that some sensitive individuals can be affected by breathing the smoke of the burning plant. Chewing by insects may also provide an exit for droplets of poison to the plant's exterior. So, sleuths, the best advice is avoid it, susceptible or not.

Folks on a mushroom hunt need to know more than the habitat of morels. Attention to other clues along the trail will guarantee "successful foraging and flavorful feasts," as David Arora wrote when he autographed my copy of his book, *Mushrooms Demystified* (Ten Speed Press, 1979). The difference between a true morel and a false morel is important. In Colorado, the latter mushroom is toxic and trouble indeed. *Toxicodendron* species can also cause trouble if you fail to recognize it in all its forms. Therefore, detectives, know the plants, the trees, the shrubs, and the morels, by all means (and clues).

Dues still due for some

If you have not yet paid your dues for this year, please send \$10.00 to

Liz Ras
1014 Arcturus Drive
Colorado Springs, CO 80906

or pay at the May meeting. This is your last newsletter until your dues are received.

Thanks

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The Pikes Peak Mycological Society is a non-profit organization dedicated to advancing interest in, and understanding of, the field of mycology.

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Membership

Membership is open to all persons interested in mycology. A gastronomic passion for wild fungi is not required. Annual dues are \$10 for individual and family memberships.

Beaver Creek foray a success!

by Lori Ligon

Sixteen people attended our first foray of the season to Beaver Creek on 11 May. George Davis was certainly the envy of all. He not only found the most morels (seventy-two!), but he plucked the tallest—six and a half inches. Of course Dennis Craig came through with his usual large cache—fifty-two morels. The total number of morels harvested was two hundred twenty-five, along with a few *Pleurotus* and a group of *Coprinus atramentarius*.

Lee Barzee said it only took her fifteen years to finally find her eight beautiful morels.

Elise Canady and her friend Kathy (a potential new member) each found a morel measuring five inches tall and seven and a half inches in circumference. Talk about beginner's luck!

When Doris Bennett arrived home, she was given a new black kitten by her daughter. Doris named him Morey in honor of the day she found morels for the first time.

We thought Caren and Dan Lacey left for home with a lone morel, but they decided to look one more time and found two dozen.

Let's hope future forays will be as successful. Pray for rain. For those who couldn't go on the foray, dried morels are available from:

Incredible Wild Edibles, Inc.
William Jaspers III, Pres.
Dept. RN, P.O. Box 23544
Minneapolis, MN 55423

Phone (612) 861-1248

This space available.

Meeting news

☞ **May.** Because Monday is Memorial Day, the May meeting will be held on Tuesday, 28 May, in the Junior League office at 2914 Beacon Street, just south of Fillmore. As usual, the meeting will begin at 7:00 P.M., with the call to order at 7:30.

You won't want to miss this month's program. Ken Pals, who directs interpretive activities at the Bear Creek Regional Park Nature Center, will present a slide show on mushroom identification. Ken is an accomplished nature photographer.

Take a few extra dollars to the meeting again this month because we're having yet another raffle. It seems George Singer would rather eat steak than hamburger at the August picnic, and he's donating a dehydrator to raise money for his cause.

Morel Sauce Rosenthal

The following recipe, from *Joe's Book of Mushroom Cookery* by Jack Czarnecki (Atheneum, 1988), is Dan and Caren Lacey's favorite way to eat morels. This sauce goes well with veal or pork and can be used to simmer chicken that has been partially precooked.

- 1 ounce dried morels
- 3 cups water
- 3 tablespoons chopped onion
- 3 tablespoons chopped green peppers
- 2 tablespoons clarified butter
- 1 teaspoon sugar
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 tablespoon soy sauce
- 1½ tablespoons arrowroot mixed in ¼ cup water

1. Add the morels to the water and bring to a boil. Let simmer for ten minutes.

2. Sauté the onions and green peppers in the butter until the onions are transparent.

3. Add the morels and liquid mixture and the sugar, salt, and soy to the onions and green peppers. Simmer until the volume of liquid comes to two cups.

4. Separate the liquid from the mushrooms, and thicken with the arrowroot-and-water mixture to desired consistency. Add the morels back to the sauce, sliced if desired.

Makes two cups.

Stems and pieces



NAMA foray. The North American Mycological Association will hold its annual national foray, 15-18 August, at Paul Smith's College in the Adirondack mountains of New York State. This glorious woodland, within an hour's drive of Lake Placid, includes bogs and a variety of forest types. 🍄

High-tech pig. An article by Jeffrey Brune in *Discover*, January 1991, describes the latest competition for truffle-hunting pigs. Biochemist Krishna Persaud of the University of Manchester in England has designed a hand-held electronic sniffer

whose gas sensors detect the telltale blend of alcohols, ketones, and aldehydes released through the ground by the hidden truffles. 🍄

Chemical reagents. Mycro-Solutions has available a variety of research reagents for professional and amateur mycologists. The reagents, such as Melzer's, Congo Red, and Phloxine B, are helpful in species identification, especially in microscopic work with hyphae and spores. For further information contact
Mycro-Solutions
P.O. box 1219
Webster, NY 14580. 🍄

Mall mushroom update. According to Annette Campbell, the *Leucoagaricus* sp. she found growing in a mall planter near a movie theater has fruited again. At least she can't say her husband never takes her anywhere. 🍄

Rain Report

Sadly, personal, logistical, and bureaucratic snafus conspired to deprive this report of data from the National Weather Service. However, the predictions of *The Old Farmer's Almanac* (Yankee Publishing Incorporated, 1990) are available.

Consistent with *Farmer's* forecast of a warm, dry

spring, the rest of May should be warm and sunny in both the Rockies and the central plains. In June, expect average to above-average rainfall in both the mountains and plains. Temperatures in early June will be below normal, and will turn warm later in the month (again, both in mountains and plains).

Further details are available at your local bookstore, or call the Weather Service at 596-1116.

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