

Spore-Addict Times

The Newsletter of the Pikes Peak Mycological Society

June 1992

About now the dogwood must be blooming in southern Illinois where I used to live. And that means it is the season for morels, those astonishingly delicious mushrooms that burst up out of the cool, damp soil in the woods of late April—after the bloodroot and anemone and before the mandrakes bloom.

Morels have the distinct advantage of not looking like anything poisonous, but rather like upside down, round-ended ice-cream cones elaborately Swiss-cheesed with holes, balanced on short, fat stalks. And they don't taste faintly like earthy supermarket mushrooms. To call them delicious is to say that Helen of Troy was probably somewhat nice looking.

In fact their elegant flavor inspires some peculiar behavior among morel enthusiasts. These delicacies are not common. They do not litter the woods. One does not fall over them. They blend in expertly with the leaf litter, and they prefer certain out-of-the-way spots. For instance, before American elms completely died out in the area, victims of the Dutch-elm disease, morels especially liked the vicinity of old elm roots.

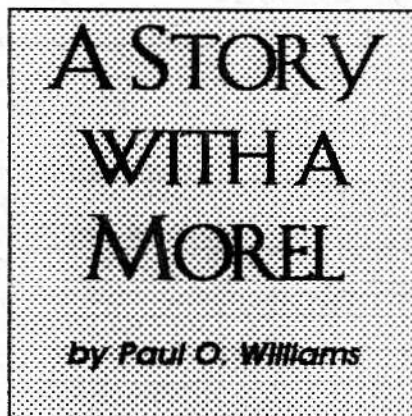
Dedicated morel hunters all have favorite mushrooming spots, about which they are extremely secretive. If you are talking to one in early evening, he will likely remark vaguely about duties at home and drift away with his eye on you to see that you don't

follow. His family might as well eat supper without him. He won't be back until well after dark. Nobody in the family worries about this. They are as eager for morels as he is.

Property rights seem suspended during morel season. One finds pickup trucks parked in odd places, on private land, across which some morel hunter has set out in search of his treasure, stepping around the "no trespassing" signs, eyes, no doubt, on the ground.

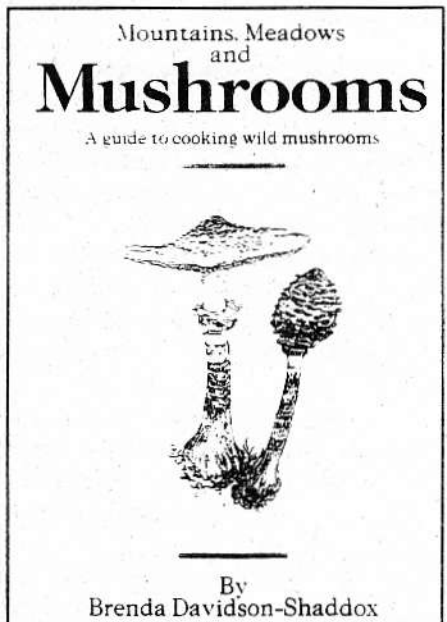
--I recall one friend, Bob, telling me he had gone up a wooded ridge behind his house looking for morels, but every one he found had a small twig stuck next to it as a mark of possession. The previous hunters were letting them grow a little more to get that last ounce of flavor. He honored the twigs, though I could tell it was a little ruefully. He knew the boys who had staked their claims and

continues



New cookbook published

A unique mushroom cookbook has recently been published. *Mountains, Meadows and Mushrooms, A Guide to Cooking Wild Mushrooms* has over 100 pages of recipes that range from main dishes to desserts. The book accompanies each recipe with a suggested menu and recommends a wine to complete the meal.



Mountains, Meadows and Mushrooms also contains general information on gathering, cleaning and preserving mushrooms for later use.

continues

A Story, continued

didn't want to infringe their rights on land none of them owned.

When the Mississippi is not in spring flood, some of the big islands in the river support good morel crops, and one can see local people set out in their boats—to fish, of course, but forgetting their poles.

One evening in spring a friend gave me two small morels from his sack. Only two? I was delighted. They would enhance an ordinary family supper even with only a few morsels for each of us. Then he astonished me by telling me exactly where he'd found them. At the time I didn't know he was moving away in a few weeks. Then it made more sense.

[Reprinted from *The Christian Science Monitor*, 24 April 1992.]

In memory

Charter member Lee Barzee's husband, Ken, recently passed on after a prolonged illness. In memory of Ken, the Pikes Peak Mycological Society has made a contribution to the American Cancer Society.

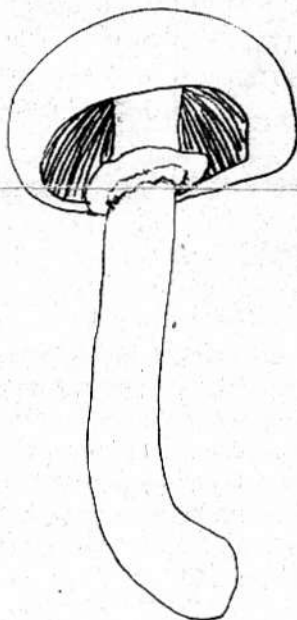


New cookbook continued

The book's author, Brenda Davidson-Shaddox, is a Texas mushroomer who spends summers in Colorado writing and enjoying wild mushrooms at her cabin in the San Juan Mountains. Suzy Olsen, a talented artist and mushroom enthusiast, has illustrated the book with drawings of seventeen mushroom varieties.

The book is on sale in various shops in Colorado and is available directly from the author for \$11.76, including shipping. Write to

Brenda Davidson-Shaddox
3906 Hunters Tree
San Antonio, TX 78230
(512) 492-4229



Agaricus arvensis

Morels prove elusive

by Lori Ligon

On a scouting trip on 27 May to plan a foray, Dennis Craig, Don Berrigan, George Singer, and I left Colorado Springs which was enshrouded in dense fog and drizzle. We hoped to find better weather and morels on Rampart Range. Hope springs eternal in a forager's breast!

That day I was to learn the true meaning of elusive. Eagle Eye George spotted the first morel and called me to look for more within a six-foot radius of him. As I approached, he lost sight of his morel as I had stepped on it! Next Don found one and called me to come look at it. Fortunately for me he had stuck his knife next to it, so it was easy for me to see.

But then I was standing only a foot away from Dennis when he said, "What about this one?" as he plucked a four-inch morel from a mass of junipers. Even Don and George admitted that they would never have seen it. (Were they saying that just to make me feel better?) The three of us jealously declared that Dennis' morel looked abortive and definitely not typical.

Next George located another morel only two feet away. I

continues

Spore-Addict Times

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Colorado Springs, CO 80901

Spore-Addict Times is published monthly from April through October by the Pikes Peak Mycological Society. Submissions of articles, book reviews, letters, artwork, recipes, and ideas are encouraged.

The Pikes Peak Mycological Society is a non-profit organization dedicated to advancing interest in, and understanding

of, the field of mycology. 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.

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scanned intensively before I finally saw it.

Nine hours after we left Colorado Springs, I arrived home—tired, wet, cold, and hungry, but happy. The four of us had harvested forty-five morels. I won't reveal how many each of us found; it might be embarrassing to someone.

The following Saturday, Sheila Steele, Doris Bennet, Dennis Craig, Caren and Dan Lacey, Mary Fielder, Jack Richards, Ester Price, David Watson, three large dogs, and I found approximately 100 morels [with no help from the dogs—Ed.] on Rampart Range. Of course these were the ones we left for others when we were on the scouting trip a few days before.

You might think that dark morels would be more easily seen if the ground were white. They're not. That afternoon the ground was covered with hail and snow, and only Dan found a morel. Dan also has the distinction of staying out in the freezing, soaking drizzle longer than anyone else. In his own words, maybe he's "completely deranged."

David Watson found a very large *Gyromitra esculenta* on this foray. Does this ability run in the family? Annette Campbell found one the week before.

In the end we might have found more morels if David had led us to his secret place where he and Annette found four pounds last year. However, Annette had forbidden him to do this under penalty of death! [David regrets to report that the secret place is barren this year.—Ed.]

Meeting News

Whether or not you attended Jay Kilgore's program last year on orienteering, you'll benefit from this new installment. This month, Jay will present "Orienteering II, The Sequel," a forty-minute program complete with handouts. This is a hands-on lesson where participants may practice their skills in small groups. Take a compass to the meeting if you have one.

Orienteering is an important skill for mushroomers. Don't miss this chance to review the details of the technique.

As usual, Mike Chladek will keep members on their toes with more of the Horrible Hundred, his challenging collection of mushroom trivia questions. And if time permits, Mike has a short video that will awaken the mycophagist in everyone.

The meeting will be held at the Junior League at 2914 Beacon Street.

Last Month

Twenty-two people attended the May meeting.

The Society continued its struggle with the issue of liability and how to avoid it. Several members made the point that by providing a first aid kit for forays, the Society is assuming some responsibility for participants' welfare. This undermines the Society's attempt to avoid liability as reflected in the liability waiver required of all members and foray participants. The first aid kit's future looks bleak. Members are encouraged to provide their own supplies as they see fit.

22 June, 1992
Monday

Jay Kilgore will talk
about orienteering at
the PPMS meeting.
Starts at 7:00 p.m.
at the Junior League.

The Society's business cards are in short supply and should be reprinted soon. There was some discussion of updating the logo design before they are ordered.

Lori Ligon reported a treasury balance of \$412. The search for a more affordable (i.e., tree) checking account continues.

A poster listing various occupations involving mycology training was received by mail and will be added to the library collection.

David Watson requested more help with the newsletter in the way of articles by members and submission of other information.

Cass and Rose Trzyna celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary and brought pictures to share with the group.

The program was a video about hunting mushrooms in the Pacific Northwest.

Thanks to George Singer and his wife for some delicious refreshments.

Stems & Pieces

Toxic Trivia

Amatoxins, the toxins in mushrooms of the genus *Amanita*, wreak such havoc on the poor souls who ingest them in part because the toxins are difficult for the body to eliminate. The presence of amatoxins in the blood is prolonged because the toxins are taken up by hepatocytes, the active cells of the liver, excreted into the bile, and then reabsorbed.

One of the most carcinogenic naturally-occurring substances known, aflatoxin B₁, is the product of—you guessed it—a fungus: mold in the genus *Aspergillus*.

A different taste

In worldwide production of mushrooms, *Flammulina* ranked fourth in 1983-84.



Thank you

The following devoted members, upstanding citizens, and kind souls contributed material for Spore-Addict Times in the past month:

Doris Bennett

George Singer

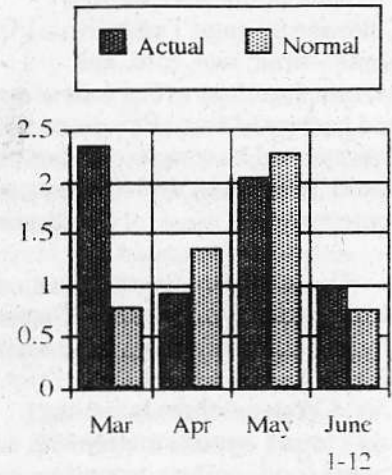
Lori Ligon

Annette Campbell

Thanks to all.

Rain Report

Colorado Springs Monthly Rainfall (inches)



Totals as of 12 June:

Normal year-to-date: 5.75 in.

Actual year-to-date: 6.38 in.

(111 percent of normal)

Thirty-day outlook: above normal (through mid-July)

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♻️ Printed on 100% recycled paper

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