

Connecticut-Westchester Mycological Association

Spores Illustrated

WINTER
2010



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A GOOD NEW YEAR TO ALL COMA MEMBERS AND FRIENDS



HAPPY MUSHROOMING TO ALL IN 2010

COMA Winter Program

Thursday, March 4, 2010 7:30 pm

Tibet's Most Marvelous Mushrooms. Join us for a special winter program by Daniel Winkler on medical and other mushrooms found in Tibet. A former member of the Puget Sound Mycological Society in Seattle, Daniel has studied and conducted tours in Tibet for many years. In this illustrated talk, he will focus on the fascinating *Yartsa gunbu* or Caterpillar fungus (*Cordyceps sinensis*) and its role in the Tibetan pharmacopoeia. Photo illustrations and stories from Daniel's "MushRoaming" tours, the ecology of the Tibetan plateau, morels, Buddhist culture, and much more are all part of this unique experience. Don't miss it!

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT: *Highlights from COMA's Year*

MUSHROOM UNIVERSITY: COMA's main purpose is to promote mycological education to its members and the public at large. Our mycological year started out in March and April with a bang. Mushroom University is in its fourth year of operation. Participants meet at my home in Croton on Hudson on Saturdays from 9:00 AM to 1:00 PM. Our professor is none other than Gary Lincoff who takes the train in from the city to work with us. In past years we had a beginner's course covering all the major genera. Then the year before last we concentrated on the Boletes. Last year we studied the mycorrhizal mushrooms, Russulas and Lactarius. We all learned and retained a lot especially about the more common species, but when it came time to test our new-found prowess in the field with the more unusual ones that appear in the summer, there were few around to identify. Hopefully next year will be more fruitful. I should add that everyone who has participated in Mushroom U over the past three years has improved his or her knowledge of fungi exponentially. We have also learned to study on our own. Damon Brunette, for example, has been working with Taro Ietaka on slime molds and is becoming an expert in Myxomycetes, as well as Boletes. JJ Murphy has only been with COMA for a couple of years, but she is now spending a good deal of her energy writing ably and enthusiastically about mushrooms on her website. Zaac Chavez continues to amaze me with his passion for identification, note-taking and mushroom spore-prints. I would love to see more COMA members take advantage of the opportunity to advance in our hobby by taking six lessons with us this late winter. Since COMA co-sponsor's MU, so that everyone essentially gets a scholarship, the cost to you is only \$100. *If you think you might want to attend MU in 2010, be sure to contact me at diannasmith@optonline.net as soon as possible*, because we have space for a maximum of 13 students. This coming semester we are going back to basics to tackle a topic that all of us are interested in getting a better handle on: Mushroom Identification for both Beginners and Experienced Identifiers!

COMA PROGRAMS: On his tour of the northeast, internationally known mushroom photographer Taylor Lockwood traveled from Florida to show us his newest DVD, designed especially for poison control centers, the medical community, and mushroom beginners. In a well-edited video he talked about the importance of learning the poisonous mushrooms and recognizing their symptoms of toxicity. Another of COMA's outstanding programs was entitled "Darwin, Evolution and Mushrooms." In this case we were fortunate to be graced by the presence young Charles Darwin himself. He was remarkably animated for a man who just celebrated his 200th birthday (though it is curious how much he reminded me of Gary Lincoff). With the benefit of hindsight he was able to show us some of the mushrooms he never actually got to see in person during his voyage on the Beagle, as well as the few he did see and mention in passing in his writings. COMA President emeritus Dave Rose produced our third and final program of the year on one of the most famous gatherings of mycophiles in the U.S., the Telluride Mushroom Festival. The entire town at this event comes out to watch the participants (dressed as mushrooms and wizards) parade down the main drag in their elaborate costumes.

Dave and Sue Rose trekked there this summer where Dave was giving a talk on the history of mycology in the US and where Gary's new movie "Know Your Mushrooms" produced by Ron Mann was prominently featured. For those who haven't seen the movie yet, Dave explained that it focused primarily on the people and culture of the annual festival. He also clued us in on all the colorful characters who have been organizing and attending the event over the past twenty-nine years in an entertaining slide presentation given at the Friends' Meeting House in October. It made us want to fly out to next year's thirtieth anniversary bash, which is sure to be doubly fantastic.

FORAYS and a BIOBLITZ: Our COMA forays, organized by Don Shernoff, are considered a favorite for northeastern mushroomers and this year was no exception. We had participants from nearly all the region's clubs. Our guest mycologists included Roz Lowen, Rod Tulloss, principle identifier Leon Shernoff, as well as Noah Siegel and John Plischke III. Despite locally dry conditions, Ursula Hoffmann recorded approximately 300 different species of fungi and myxomycetes. Many might argue that the highlight of the foray was the food. Joe and Kathy Brandt, our co-vice presidents and beloved foodies, took charge of mycophagy. They were as generous as ever with their recipes, talent and time. In fact there was so much delicious food that no one felt like eating dinner afterwards.

In contrast to our COMA Foray, it poured every single day of the NEMF Foray at Cape Cod where I was given the task of promoting next year's NEMF Foray on the final night of presentations. Despite the rain, many of us ventured out to collect for the display tables where we were exposed to a number of mushrooms we don't commonly find in our area: *Russula ventricospes*, *Laccaria trullisata*, *Amanita polypyramis*, and *Tricholoma fumosoluteum* – basically mushrooms mycorrhizal with oaks and conifers which fruit in porous, sandy soil.

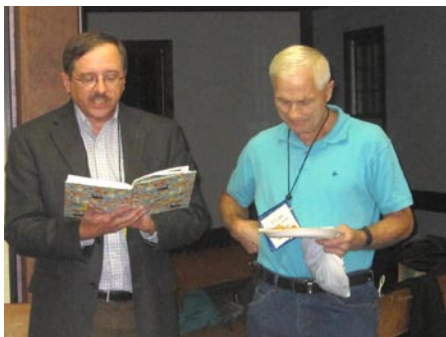
Finally, maintaining a tradition of reaching out to the community, at the end of September several of us volunteered to participate in the first Saw Mill River Bioblitz. Our fungi team included Don Shernoff, Rena Wertzer, Taro Ietaka, Constance Robin Burkhardt, Peter Russell and me. All told, there were 650 species of plants, animals, insects and fungi documented, of which over sixty were fungi or slime molds. Mind you, it wasn't easy getting this many recorded, as the ground was dry. We found most of our count on fallen wood!

MUSHROOMS: According with whom you speak, this was a pretty good year for mushrooms like *Grifola frondosa*, *Laetiporus sulphureus*, *Cantharellus cibarius*, *Craterellus fallax*, and the various species of *Hericium*. But it was a bleak year for many other mushrooms. Our spring and early summer were cool and wet, which may or may not account for it being a relatively poor year for mycorrhizal mushrooms like *Russulas*, *Lactarius*, *Boletes* and *Amanitas*. Fruitings of *Agaricus* and *Clitocybe nuda* (Blewits) were pretty skimpy, too. My theory is that with all that water available to trees in our area in the beginning of the season, there was no apparent need for mushrooms to sprout. But that's just a guess and I can't come up with a reasonable guess as to why the subsequent dry weather didn't produce a wider variety of fungi. (Frankly, I am *almost* ready to give up trying to figure out why some years are good for particular mushrooms while others aren't).

ANNUAL DINNER: Our final event of the 2009 year was the annual dinner organized by Lou Tartaro and implemented by him and a host of volunteers. The potluck offerings were sumptuous and gorgeously presented. There was general agreement that this was the best dinner yet in COMA's recent history. It was wonderful to socialize with both regular attendees and several newcomers. At the meeting, the membership approved continuation of the current officers for next year: Kathy and Joe Brandt as vice presidents, Don Shernoff as treasurer, Peggy DeGasperis as secretary and me as president. Capping off a perfect evening was a surprise tribute to George Johanson, COMA's unofficial good-will ambassador. Following a moving talk praising George's unique virtues of goodness and generosity, Dave Rose handed him a book filled with photos, personal notes and memories written by COMA members. George was surprised and characteristically humble on receiving the well-deserved accolades of his companions.

2010: Looking ahead to the new year, in addition to encouraging you to sign up for Mushroom University, I would also love to see greater participation in walks and our educational programs. And I would be thrilled to see our membership increase. To do that, I need you all to help persuade friends and visitors to join our club. The benefits of membership are numerous: receipt of our widely respected newsletter, *Spores Illustrated*; news of and participation in our educational programs by great mycological presenters; the opportunity to join the Mushroom University student body; and the acquaintance of the friendliest club members anywhere!

Be aware that we will not be having our usual annual foray at Cave Hill this year. Instead the biggest event we will be looking forward to is the NEMF 2010 Foray. The four-day, three-night foray is being sponsored by members of COMA, the Long Island Mycological Club (LIMC), the New York Mycological Society (NYMS) and the Mid-Hudson Mycological Association (MHMA). It will take place the last full week of September, from Thursday the 23rd to Sunday the 26th. We found a terrific place for the foray, Soyuzivka Ukrainian Cultural Heritage Center in nearby Kerhonkson, NY. As chairperson for the foray, I have been working to build a superb team of people to head various aspects of the event. Please lend them and myself a hand at making it a smooth-running, fun occasion for everyone who attends. Please be aware that interest in joining this foray is already incredibly high. (See YouTube promo on line at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gywcNs0quxw>)



David Rose presenting George Johanson with a tribute at COMA's banquet.



2010 NEMF Samuel Ristich Foray
34th Annual Foray of the N Mycological Federation
September 23-26, 2010
Soyuzivka Ukrainian Cultural Heritage Center
Kerhonkson, NY

The Northeast Mycological Federation is holding its 2010 Sam Ristich Foray at Soyuzivka, Ukrainian Cultural Heritage Center, in Kerhonkson, NY. Soyuzivka (Soy-u-'zhif-ka) is just south of the Catskills in the Shawangunk Ridge region, easily accessible from I-87 and I-84.

Modeled after the architecture of the Carpathian Mountains, the buildings that make up the resort were embellished by the famous woodcarver, Cherniovsky. The venue is well equipped to host our foray, having comfortable rooms for well over 200, most with their own bathrooms, several areas for lectures and workshops, a mycophagy kitchen and a huge hall for display and evening presentations.

This year's faculty has been assembled by our Chief Mycologist, Gary Lincoff, author of *The Audubon Guide to North American Mushrooms*. At this time the group includes: Raymond Archambault, Russ Cohen, Roy Halling, Marie Heerkens, Roz Lowen, Larry Millman, John Plischke III, Noah Siegel, Walt Sturgeon, Rod Tulloss and Bill Yule. They will present workshops and lectures on ascomycetes, Amanitas, Boletes, photography, mushroom art, microscopy and wild food foraging, among others. Elinoar Shavit will organize our mycophagy event with some surprises in store. There will be socials, games and awards as usual.

There are nearly 400 acres of land and two miles of trails at Soyuzivka. Elmer LeSeur, our walks coordinator, will take advantage of over 15,000 acres within a short distance of the Heritage Center to provide varied and interesting walk venues. Having spent fifteen Septembers in this area, I have found this time of year to provide plentiful mushrooms including excellent edibles such as *Boletus edulis*, *Rozites* (now *Cortinarius!*) *caperata*, *Grifola frondosa*, *Cantherellula umbonata*, *Hericium* etc., etc.. And favorable conditions bring out unusual species for the curious among us.

The housing at Soyuzivka consists of eleven lodges, each uniquely designed with varying room layouts, settings and amenities. Accommodations will be assigned on a first-come-first-served basis. A few of the lodges, Darnycia, Kyiv, Poltava and the Studio, have suites that are amenable to groups, so to book those rooms groups must apply together. Please contact the registrar about these special arrangements.

Meal plans are as follows: the 8 meal plan includes Thursday dinner, Friday & Saturday breakfast, lunch & dinner (Saturday is a dinner banquet), and Sunday breakfast. The 6 meal plan includes Friday lunch & dinner, Saturday breakfast, lunch & dinner banquet, and Sunday breakfast. The Saturday Commuters plan includes breakfast, lunch and dinner banquet.

If you are in need of transportation, or can provide it, to Soyuzivka please be sure to check the applicable box on the registration form. We will try to coordinate rides to the site.

For further details please visit our website at: <http://nemf.org/files/2010/2010.html>.

If you have any questions please contact me, Paul Sadowski, registrar, at nemf2010@verizon.net

Everyone is encouraged to register early to avoid being disappointed once registration has filled. The website will be updated to show the number of registrants enrolled.

What's Doing In & Around Kerhonkson, Site of the 2010 NEMF Foray

NEMF2010 will feature outside recreational activities to please families of all ages and interests. Bring the children! Where else can you find a dude ranch www.pinegroveranch.com and a working farm and farmers market www.kelderfarm.com plus mini-golf within a few miles of each other? Kerhonkson!

September is the perfect time for world-class rock climbing in the Shawangunks in nearby New Paltz. If rock climbing is not for you, you're within minutes of hiking, mountain biking and horseback riding www.mohonkpreserve.org.

For those interested in history, Hyde Park offers a wealth of museums and estates open to public. [Historic Hyde Park](http://www.historichydepark.org) website provides information on Franklin D. Roosevelt home, Eleanor Roosevelt Center, FDR library, and Vanderbilt mansion.

Visit New York's newest State Park, Walkway Over the Hudson State Park, www.walkway.org, is located on The Poughkeepsie Highland Railroad Bridge, a marvel of 19th Century Industrial Revolution engineering. Opened to the public on October 3, 2009, this unique scenic attraction is bracketed by nature trails, museums, restaurants, shops and restrooms.

For art and architecture buffs both children and adults, Opus 40 & Quarryman's Museum in Saugerties (near Woodstock) www.opus40.org is a truly unique 6-acre sculpture built in an abandoned bluestone quarry. The Quarryman's Museum preserves the stone working and farming tools of the 19th Century.

Although a bit of a drive from Kerhonkson, [Olana](http://www.olana.org) in Hudson is a visit sure to leave a lasting impression. An estate built by the Hudson River School artist Frederick Church in mid 19th Century, it provides one of the most spectacular views of the Hudson and a well-preserved building in a unique mix of Italian and Persian styles.

The bounty of the Hudson Valley is evident at the farms and farm markets in our area. Local families continue to farm the land and grow the freshest, most mouth-watering produce you will find anywhere!

New Paltz is astonishingly rich in the tradition of harvest, with a wonderful variety of farming and food production stretching from early summer to Christmas. Bring your family to delight in visits to our farms and farm-stands. The Hudson Valley has long been a travel destination, both for its well-preserved Colonial history and for its accessible Catskill mountain scenery. The whole family can find something to enjoy in the cities and towns, as well as in its many parks and natural areas.



Soyuzivka Ukrainian Cultural Heritage Center, Kehonkson, N. Y.

CALLING ALL WILD MUSHROOM FOODIES

Mycophagy is a favorite social highlight at NEMF forays, and a number of new and exciting wild mushroom dishes, some off the beaten track like Carpaccio of Hen of the Woods, and Chanterelle and Apricot Doughnuts, are already in the works. In 2010, we hope to start a new NEMF tradition: sharing favorite wild mushroom recipes and preparations. Please send us one or two of your favorite wild mushroom recipes using late summer/early fall mushrooms (store-bought mushrooms are acceptable option), and we will choose three favorites. The three recipes that will be selected will highlight the wild mushroom offerings at the NEMF 2010 mycophagy. We hope that the creators of these recipes will help us prepare them for everyone to taste. All the recipes received will be featured on the NEMF website. Who knows, in time and given a lively participation, there could be a NEMF cookbook in it!

Camp Soyuzivka and the area around it offer a variety of habitats and promises to be wonderful hunting grounds for edible mushrooms. At the end of September we can expect to find Hen of the Woods, Chicken Mushrooms, Lobster Mushrooms, Black Trumpets, Chanterelles, Oyster Mushrooms, species of *Lactarius*, like *Lactarius hygrophoroides* and *L.volemus*, a variety of wonderful Boletes, Puffballs, and hopefully some mushrooms that are not often collected in great numbers like Gypsy Mushrooms. The recipes can feature dry mushrooms as well. E-mail your recipes to mycophagy@gmail.com.



Mycologist Interviewed by Convicted Felon by David Rose

Martha Stewart, for better or worse, has positioned herself as the Delphic oracle of popular taste in contemporary culture, and she has been ranked one of the most powerful women in America for years. One suspects her of being a reluctant mycologist, but her recent interview of Gary Lincoff on *The Martha Stewart Show* illustrates her willingness to ride, for a moment, the wavelet of popularity that the movie *Know Your Mushrooms* brought on in 2009. Stewart, it appears, is not a reluctant *mycophagist*, for as far as Martha Stewart Living Omnimedia promotes cooking and cuisine for its legions of admiring foodies to that extent will she treat the lowly fungus as material fit for taste-mongering. We know this also because she has previously focused on black truffles, a fungal foodstuff that proliferates most successfully in suburban environments of incomparable wealth.

Predictably, what was discussed on the Lincoff episode of *The Martha Stewart Show* was not the role of ectomycorrhizae in forest ecosystems or the toxic principle in *Conocybe filaris* (subjects upon which Gary might have readily elaborated) but rather the common edible fungi to be found in the northeast in late summer and autumn: matsutake, hen-of-the-woods, and blewits. This seems all well and good, but the real tip-off to how *The Martha Stewart Show* characterizes mushrooms strictly as Omnimedia Commodities was revealed in the intro where a set-piece of gourds was constructed to resemble color-scrubbed boletes: conflating fungal and vegetable worlds, signifying autumnal plentitude, and extending a goodly measure of acceptance to that which is notoriously associated with hallucinations and putrefaction. Fortunately for the viewing audience, Gary gave an economical overview of the fungi displayed until Martha abruptly cut him off in mid-sentence just on the verge of a concluding point on how to wrap mushrooms correctly in waxed paper. The show provided a copy of the *Audubon Field Guide to Mushrooms* to all members of the television audience, or so she claimed.

Martha Stewart has cultured a media image that serves to align popular taste (her taste) with the dictates of pure consumerism. Had she conducted a mushroom inventory of the Yale-like campus of the federal prison camp in Alderson, West Virginia in 2004, her credibility about mycology might have been vastly improved. There's one thing certain about mycology – it will never really catch on. It will never be as popular as the New York Yankees, Twitter, or Michael Jackson; it will never be as popular as pizza, sex, or Martha Stewart. *Why?* Because mycology is about mushrooms; and mushrooms, America is convinced, are suspicious and inconsequential, despite (perhaps *because of*) attempts like Stewart's to portray the fungi unequivocally as groceries from the woodland supermarket. What is most heartening, on the other hand, is that Gary Lincoff has given us once more a nifty introduction to the world of fungi, and we eagerly await another television lesson from him soon – but hopefully not on *Whatever, Martha*.

January 4, 2010 / David Rose / Connecticut-Westchester Mycological Association (COMA)

MUSHROOMS FOR HEALTH: Medicinal Secrets of Northeastern Fungi

by Greg A. Marley.

Down East Publications, 2009

Review by Dianna Smith

Prior to reading this new publication, I thought assertions might be made about the health benefits of all mushrooms in general without the scientific data to back up the claims. While I have no doubt that many mushrooms may be discovered to have medicinal properties, I was relieved to learn that the author focused on those fungi that have been and are being studied by legitimate scientists and medical professionals in Asia, Europe and the United States. Greg Marley's basic message is that medicine in the west is focused on trauma. Traditional Chinese medicine, on the other hand, aims to encourage physical and mental health by promoting a balanced life style that incorporates the concept of food as functional medicine. We would be wise, he believes, to incorporate this point of view into our own lives. As one component in a healthy lifestyle that includes exercise and eating more vitamin-rich fruits and vegetables, we would benefit by incorporating into our diet the northeastern fungi known to have health-stimulating and immunosuppressant properties. Two of the most foundational chapters focus on an explanation of how the immune system operates and how specific mushroom compounds, such as triterpenes and beta glucans, interact with it. The remaining chapters are each devoted to specific fungi and their known medicinal properties. Mushrooms covered include Reishi, Maitake, Turkey Tail, Oyster Mushrooms, Chaga, Lion's Mane and comb tooth, Birch Polypore, Artist's Conk, Red-belted Polypore and the Tinder Conk. Marley describes each fungus, its time of fruiting and habitat, its ecological role in the environment, its edibility and toxicity, followed by its uses in folk and traditional medicine. He discusses current medicinal uses of each fungus and the results of contemporary research into its anti-tumor, antioxidant, anti-inflammatory and/or anti-hyperglycemic properties. He then devotes several paragraphs on the methods of collection and preservation, preparation and therapeutic use. The appendixes describe the method, equipment and ingredients for creating restorative tinctures by the double extraction method. There is also a helpful glossary.

I recommend this book as essential reading for both budding and experienced mycologists. It is an easy read not requiring an advanced degree in biochemistry to understand. The book is well written with supportive documentation of recent research studies. In short, MUSHROOMS FOR HEALTH is compelling and at a mere \$15.95 for the paperback version, it is a bargain that belongs within easy reach of everyone's kitchen.

Incidentally, after finishing Greg Marley's tome, I found reading Elinor Shavit's expert articles on the subject of medicinal mushrooms, (in *Fungi* magazine), even more illuminating the second time around.

Online Winter Mushrooming

Don't forget to spend some time this winter at www.comafungi.org, our informative website which Ursula Hoffman is maintaining for us. There is a wealth of information there including back issues of *Spores Illustrated*, Gary Lincoff's education tips, David Roses's "Notes from Underground," club news and more.

Follow the link to Dianna's educational website, www.fungiphotos.net for hours of viewing and learning about our favorite kingdom. Besides several excellent articles by Bill Bakaitis, there are Dianna's "Lessons on Mushrooming Basics, Boletes, and Lactarius." She plans to include supplementary online presentations for you over the coming months. Also, in addition to the fungi/myxomycete photo galleries of Eleanor Yarrow and Peter Katsaros, we are fortunate to now have the amazing teaching slides of Sam Ristich, thanks to the prodigious labors of Gerry and Sandy Sheine. Visit often!

A Close Encounter on a Mushroom Walk

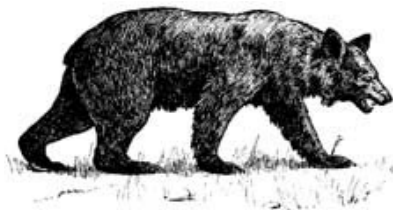
By Ursula Hoffman

Some years ago, I was on a small group wildlife safari in Alaska. It was a great trip, five meals a day, lots of wildlife and information, varied modes of transport, first going south in a small bus from Anchorage to a few days on the Kenai Peninsula, rafting on the Kenai River, touring the Kenai Fjords bay on a small private boat so we could get close to the animals in the water and could land at and walk on a glacier, then north again in our small bus, with many stops for picnics and walks and hotels, to a week at the far end of Denali National Park, access restricted to people who own property there, exploring the tundra, spotting moose, wolves, bears, eagles..., on foot and from the air in a small plane, and finally taking the scenic route on the wonderful Alaska Railroad from Denali back to Anchorage to catch our big planes home.

Our guides were excellent hosts and knew geology, local history, and animals. But they did not know mushrooms. Therefore, during a stop in Seward to see the Alaska Sealife Center, I bought them a couple of mushroom books, and every afternoon, at their request, I spent an hour collecting mushrooms and a little time talking about them with our busy guides. One afternoon, somewhere near Talkeetna just south of Denali, we stopped at our hotel for the night. The hotel had many two-story buildings arranged in a very large U shape, connected to each other by tall wooden fences. My roommate always lay down for a nap and I went foraging. I had a very long walk back to the open end of the U and around the last building and then in reverse on the strip of land between the back of the buildings and the woods. It was raining but I had an umbrella. Looking down and to my left into the woods, I concentrated on spotting and picking mushrooms growing mostly at my feet and to the side at the edge of the woods, walking very slowly as there was a lot to see. Suddenly, I glimpsed something moving, large and

brown, out of the corner of my right eye. I panicked as I am scared of big dogs. But when I looked up, I saw a huge grizzly staring back at me. Oh, was I happy that it was not a dog! The bear was at the closed end of the U where the kitchen was, investigating the garbage bins, about 15 feet ahead of me. As it turned towards me, I humbly lowered my head and started to talk to it, all kinds of nonsense, very calmly (after all, it was not a dog): "Hello, bear. It's so nice to meet you. You are big and beautiful. I am not a moose (thinking that my umbrella might look like antlers). My name is bear, too....", meanwhile backing up very slowly and carefully as the ground was rocky and slippery. After what seemed like an eternity, I lost patience and turned around to walk forward. A couple of buildings later, one of my fellow travelers at his window waved at me; I just gestured back with my umbrella but did not stop—later he said I had seemed to be in an awful hurry. After another eternity, I got to the last of the buildings and around to the open end of the U. There was no one in sight-- this was when I lost my calm. I rushed all the way back to the closed end, up the stairs to our room and told my roommate: she laughed! OK, so nobody would believe me; I went out to the porch and lit a cigarette. But then, the bear alarm rang: it seems that a kitchen worker had seen both me and the bear and called the rangers to capture the bear and transport it somewhere else. All people in the hotel assembled, I had to tell my story, someone wanted to know whether the bear was male or female (sorry, I had not taken the time to look), someone else said the bear couldn't have been very hungry (ok, so maybe the garbage smelled better than I or the bear appreciated my friendly chatter), the guides told us what to do in an encounter with a grizzly, and I acquired a nickname, for the rest of our stay in Alaska wherever we went: *Ursula Horribilis*

P.S. Why would I have said "I am not a moose"? I had just heard a true story from one of our guides about a friend of hers. The friend had planned to stay in California that summer to be with her new boyfriend. When they broke up, she decided to come to Alaska after all, but it was too late for her usual job, she could only get work with a tourist company: she spent her days at some location, the company phoned to say when the next bus was driving by, she donned her moose outfit, posed, all the tourists in the bus looked excited and snapped their pictures. One day the bus drove by but everyone was focused somewhere else. She looked in the same direction and saw a big grizzly bear padding towards her. She started yelling "I am not a moose" whereupon the bear yelled back "Shut up or both of us will lose our jobs."



What's the Purpose of a COMA Walk?
By JJ Murphy

Are they a six-month field class best experienced by attendance at every walk? Are they a menu list of seasonal mushroom discovery? Perhaps they're an opportunity to learn from our many "edu-tainers" - gifted mycologists who make learning fun and memorable. Or maybe it's nibbling the pot luck offerings, while identifying our collected findings.

The answers are as varied as our members.

In trying to sort out whether to schedule one or two weekend walks, my one guiding thought is that I seek optimal mushroom discovery. So, time of year and habitat provide a clue to what the weekend walk is likely to offer attendees.

As a relatively new COMA member, I find that leading a walk provides an opportunity for our experienced members to explore new sites while opening my eyes to what is fruiting on my favorite trails. All I need to know to lead a COMA walk is how to get to and from the parking lot.

In 2008, I offered to lead a walk at Goose Pond State Park, where I've been hiking for more years than I care to admit. The payoff for our COMA members was the discovery of morels. I had never connected the elm trees and ash trees with morels and I certainly never noticed those mushrooms hiding in plain site.

When I offered to lead that site on one of my regular hiking trails, all I knew was it has ample free parking, footing appropriate for some of our mobility-challenged members, and mushrooms I wanted to learn to identify.

Maybe I'm a lazy walk coordinator, but if scheduling one walk per weekend makes it possible for our members to apply their learning most effectively - so be it.

As for our members who attend walks, but feel unprepared to lead - if you can walk, you can lead. Sometimes that strategy pays off in amazing ways.

JJ Murphy is a freelance nature writer, photographer, forager, and aspiring mycologist giving nature a voice at www.WriterByNature.com. Email JJ at: jimurphy@WriterByNature.com or call her at 845-492-6626 if you would like to lead a walk.

Steve Rock has called our attention to the new and greatly improved NAMA website, <http://www.namyco.org/index.html>. Please check it out as part of your on-line winter explorations. David Rust has done a splendid job on the site.

Fiddling with Fungi: And the Winner Is...

Posted: 22 Oct 2009 09:58 AM PDT on Elio Schaechter's blog, Small Things considered
[<http://schaechter.asmblog.org/schaechter/2009/10/fiddling-with-fungi-and-the-winner-is-.html>]

Late in August of 2008 we [promised](#) to update you on the attempts to out-Stradivarius Stradivarius by crafting violins made from wood treated with fungi. Here is the [latest news](#).

Scientists at the Swiss Federal Laboratories for Materials Testing and Research made violins from wood treated with two different fungi: *Physisporinus vitreus*, for the spruce and *Xylaria longipes* (aka Dead Man's Fingers) for the sycamore. The treatment lasted six or nine months, by which time the wood had become covered with a fuzzy growth of mycelium.



P. vitreus. [Source](#).

They made four violins from the same wood: one treated for six months, another for nine months, and two untreated. The British violinist [Matthew Trusler](#) played all four for an audience of more than 180 people at a forestry conference. More than 90 people ranked the bioviolin treated for nine months ahead of a real Stradivarius, which came in second, followed by the violin treated for six months. The two untreated violins came in last.

The idea here was that treating the wood with fungi might artificially recreate the structure of the wood found naturally during Stradivarius's lifetime. The [Little Ice Age](#), a period of abnormally cool weather between 1645 and 1715, produced trees with more uniform wood. Treating today's wood with the fungi artificially results in wood with similar properties.

When these modern Stradivarius soundalikes become commercially available, musicians will be able to have the sound of a Stradivarius without the price—for a mere \$25,000.

This article was sent to us by Sandy Sheine

SAVE THE DATE: NEMF FORAY 2010 – September 23-26

Many thanks to all our members who made contributions to *Spores Illustrated* throughout 2009. Please continue. It has been wonderful having so many participants. *Rena Wertzer*, editor

Deadline for Spring Issue: March 15th, 2010 !!!!!



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