

Connecticut-Westchester Mycological Association

Spores Illustrated

**SPRING
2009**



President: Dianna Smith
Diannasmith@optonline.net
 Membership: Beverly Leffers (718) 636-6348
Morrarian@juno.com
 Treasurer: Donald Shernoff (914) 761-0332
donshernoff@yahoo.com
 Editor: Rena Wertzer (914) 472-3575
Renawertzer@hotmail.com

www.comafungi.org

www.fungiphotos.net

COMA Spring Programs 2009

David Rose, Program Director

Meetings are at the **Friends' Meeting House** in Purchase, NY [see directions below]. Meetings are scheduled for **7:30 p.m.** and are open, free of charge, to the public. Bring samples of your fungi finds to all of our evening programs and we will help you with identification.

Tuesday, 4/28. The Good, the Bad, and the Tasty – Britt Bunyard, Editor-in-Chief of *Fungi* magazine, will present a stunning array of mushroom photographs, from familiar favorites to some less familiar, all by way of discussing mycoparasites. Britt's talk will survey the Kingdom Fungi to provide examples of how evolution continues to operate in Nature, producing forms bizarre, forms amazing, and, at times, forms deadly, but always, as Charles Darwin said, "infinite forms most beautiful and most wonderful."

Tuesday, 5/19. Charles Darwin's Mushrooms – Gary Lincoff, author of the Audubon *Field Guide to North American Mushrooms*, will discuss the role of mushrooms in Charles Darwin's journey around the world aboard the H.M.S. Beagle. Though Darwin mentioned only two mushrooms in his *Voyage of the Beagle*, he collected and preserved mushrooms in many places. Where he found them, what he thought about them, and how they helped form his understanding of evolution is the subject of this talk to commemorate the Darwin bicentennial in 2009.

Tuesday, 6/9. Invasive Plants – COMA's Carol Levine will present on the identification and control of invasive plants, many of which we witness overtaking natural areas at our mushroom walk sites. Invasive plants produce rapidly and can form stands that exclude all other plant species. In doing this, they damage natural areas and alter ecosystem processes. Carol will describe how to identify invasive plants and discuss methods of control and what alternative plant species are used to replace invasives.

Directions to Friends' Purchase Meeting House:

From I-684 - Take Exit 2 (Airport) to stoplight at Route 120. Turn right and go 1 mile to a sharp left turn (following Route 120). The Friends' Meeting House is on the left just after the turn.

From I-287 - Take Exit 8 (westbound) or Exit 8E (eastbound) and follow signs for Anderson Hill Road and SUNY Purchase. Take Anderson Hill Road to Route 120, turn left and go about 2 miles to the intersection with Lake Street. The Friends' Meeting House is on the right just before the intersection.

The Ten Commandments of Eating Wild Mushrooms

by Moses Mycophagist

Never eat a mushroom unless it is positively identified as edible. Mistakes can result in toxic reactions ranging from mild gastric distress to hospitalization and death. When in doubt – throw it out!

Eat only fresh mushrooms that are free from infestation by insects or larva. Mushrooms can spoil, and eating any spoiled food can cause food poisoning and adverse reactions.

Cook all mushrooms thoroughly. Some mushrooms contain toxins or gastrointestinal irritants that are rendered harmless only by cooking.

Eat mushrooms only in moderate quantities. Mushrooms are not easily digested; over-eating them is an easy way to get sick.

When trying a mushroom for the first time, eat only a small portion, and don't try any new kinds for 48 hours. As with many foods, some people are sensitive or allergic to mushrooms commonly eaten by others. Individuals with known food allergies or sensitivities should be extra careful when trying new mushrooms, especially those known to present problems for some individuals.

Don't pick mushrooms from contaminated habitats. These include chemically treated lawns, ornamental trees, power line right-of-ways, railroad right-of-ways, highways, and areas close to landfills, toxic waste areas, crop fields, and firebreaks. Contaminants may accumulate in wild mushrooms.

Never assume that a wild mushroom that you find in another country is the same edible species you know from North America, or vice versa. Many serious cases of mushroom poisoning occur when vacationers and immigrants gather and eat dangerous look-alike species not found in their native lands.

Be conservative about feeding wild mushrooms to children, the elderly, and the infirm. Avoid edible species known to cause adverse reactions in some people. Limit portion sizes for children, the elderly, and the sick because they are generally more susceptible to toxins than other people.

When trying a wild mushroom for the first time, save a few intact, uncooked specimens in the refrigerator for 48 hours. If one develops an illness or reaction within two days after trying an unfamiliar mushroom, a physician may need an uncooked specimen for identification to rule out the mushroom as a culprit.

Examine every specimen in every collection to avoid inadvertent mixing of different species.

From CVMS *Spore Print*, 1998



The VP's 2 cents by Joe Brandt

Greetings and salutations, fellow *fungaloonies*! While you're holed up waiting for Spring and the fungal things that come with it, I would like to take a mycological moment to offer a gentle reminder to everyone about fungal courtesy in the field. When we resume our walk schedule shortly, there is a point of etiquette that sometimes gets overlooked in our mad dash for mushrooms. Sites that are on our schedule are strictly off-limits prior to walks, with the possible exception of the walk leader's option to check paths, trail markers and terrain to assure a safe passage and reliable route. The picking of mushrooms —*any* mushrooms— at the site of a walk is a most definite "no-no", from several days to several *minutes* before a walk. Sometimes (particularly if you've arrived early) it's difficult to restrain yourself, but in the interest of all our wonderful club members and new guests, please, *please* practice a small bit of fungal courtesy, and wait until the walk actually begins before attempting to satisfy the urge to pick. Remember, it's not a contest to see who can find the most mushrooms. The only prize awarded to "early birds" who want to get a head start is the *booby prize*. If you have arrived at a walk early, by all means, take a stroll, or be the self-appointed "greeter" for the club, but do not —under threat of encountering one or more surly Vice-Presidents—pick mushrooms prematurely. The penalty for such a dastardly offense may be the dreaded Flying Fickle Fungal Finger (or is it the Fungal Fickle Flying Finger?) award, which no mycophile in their right (or left) mind would deign to earn.

Samuel Ristich Papers

Few educators have been as beloved as Dr. Sam Ristich, "the mushroom guru," who was an inspiration for countless mycologists. Any of the legion of Sam's students and admirers will attest to his unparalleled enthusiasm for the marvels of the world of fungi and his unique talent for encouraging interest in the study of mushrooms in just about everybody he encountered.

The Ristich family has decided to preserve Sam's scientific legacy in mycology by preserving his personal papers in an archival collection. You can help support the effort to preserve Sam's legacy by donating your own personal collection of "Ristichiana" to this archive. We are seeking:

- **Correspondence with Sam:** letters or postcards to or from Sam
- **Sam's Artwork:** spore print art or other artworks and artifacts by Sam
- **Photographs:** photos of Sam himself or Sam's photos of mushrooms

You may contribute originals or copies, whichever you prefer. To contribute materials to the Samuel Ristich archive, please contact **David Rose** at 914-738-0847 or tomashunders@aol.com. David is past president of the Connecticut-Westchester Mycological Association (COMA) and is the archivist selected by the Ristich family to organize the Samuel Ristich archive.

Guidelines for COMA Walk Leaders

COMA relies on its members to lead walks throughout the mushroom collecting season, and we appreciate the willingness of walk leaders to make our walks an enjoyable experience both for regular members and for newcomers. Leading a walk is usually a lot of fun. The two most important responsibilities for a leader of a COMA mushroom walk are **(1) to arrive at the walk site on time** and **(2) to lead the walk safely**. A walk leader does *not* have to be an expert mushroom identifier or an expert in anything. All that he or she has to do is to show up and to lead an organized walk as a representative of COMA. Here are some guidelines to help make this an enjoyable experience.

Walk Schedule: COMA publishes a list of walks and walk leaders in the spring issue of its newsletter, *Spores Illustrated*, for each mushroom season (May through October).

Time of Walk: All walks begin at 9:30 am, unless announced otherwise. We usually wait a few minutes for latecomers before we start the walk. It is recommended that the walk leader show up about 15 minutes early (around 9:15 am) to serve as a point of contact.

Length of Walk: COMA walks are usually two to three hours in duration, with additional time for lunch and a mushroom identifying session afterwards, conditions permitting.

Replacement: If a designated walk leader cannot attend the walk, he/she is responsible to find a replacement person to lead the walk since the walks cannot be cancelled.

Sign-Up Sheet: The walk leader must pass around an official COMA sign-up sheet and release form (no substitutes), making sure that all walkers, even latecomers, sign the sheet as required at each walk. After the walk, the leader will return the completed form to the president or other officer of COMA.

Introduction: Before the walk starts, the leader should welcome everyone with a brief introduction. The walk leader should identify him/herself; inform everyone that it is a COMA walk; and briefly describe the itinerary, points of safety, and points of interest.

Plan the Walk: It is always helpful for the walk leader to know the walk site and trails and to plan the walk itinerary as carefully as possible ahead of time.

Safety: Walk leaders should always ask all participants to observe common sense safety practices. Known safety hazards on our woodland walks include poison ivy, biting insects, rough and slippery trails, poisonous snakes, and the like. Avoid extreme hazards whenever possible.

Maps: Some of our walk locations have trail maps available; others do not. The walk leader should point out any posted or printed trail map available at the walk location. If a trail map is available, it is usually helpful to select a route and inform everyone about the planned route at the start of the walk.

Getting Lost: It is virtually impossible for everyone to keep together on a mushroom walk since we often depart from the trails and spread out to hunt for mushrooms. Walk leaders should inform walkers that it is each individual's own responsibility to keep with the walk leader to avoid getting lost. All participants are encouraged to stay with the walk leader during the walk.

Children: Children are welcome on walks, but they must be supervised by a parent or guardian. All rules that apply to adults also apply to children. Horseplay is not permitted.

Weather: COMA does not cancel scheduled walks ahead of time because we have no way of contacting everyone who may be planning to attend. We do not cancel walks due to anticipated bad weather. In fact, we often walk in the rain. It is therefore very important for the walk leader to arrive on time, even during bad weather. If weather conditions are so unfavorable at the walk location at the start of the walk, the walk leader may then cancel the walk, but never before. Please do not depart from this rule.

Leaving the Walk Early: Those who decide to leave a walk early before its conclusion should inform the walk leader that they are leaving early.

Equipment: It is helpful, but not required, for the walk leader to have a whistle, compass, cell phone, and simple first aid kit in addition to mushroom collecting equipment.

Park Regulations: The walk leader should point out that all participants must observe the rules and regulations of the park in which the walk takes place. If such regulations are publicly posted, the walk leader should point them out.

Mushrooms: The walk leader and/or experienced COMA members should mention to novices, newcomers and those who are not knowledgeable about mushrooms that some mushrooms are poisonous and that there is no simple rule to differentiate an edible from a poisonous mushroom. COMA is not responsible for mushroom identification and is not responsible for what any individual chooses to put in his or her mouth.

March 10, 2009 / David Rose / Connecticut-Westchester Mycological Association (COMA)

The last walk of 2008 at Sylvan Glen

photo by Dianna Smith



FINDING LOTS OF MORELS IS NOT NECESSARILY A GOOD THING

By Bill Bakaitis

First published in *Mushroom, The Journal* Issue 26, Vol.8, No.1 Winter 1989-90 p5-8

Parts also appeared in newsletters of COMA and MHMA

Since articles appearing in MTJ are not digitized, and since the problem of assessing the toxicity of morels collected from contaminated areas such as apple orchards, roadsides, and railroads has recently reemerged as a subject of interest, this article is being posted here for public accessibility and reference.

DON'T EAT THE MORELS

PART I: A TALE

Some secrets are arrogant, living with a special tension, surviving on the thin line between the known and unknown, thrilling us with the slipperiness of a tie which holds together that which needs release. The more, it seems, we fondle the knot, the looser it becomes, and so, by design, we reveal that which we intend to conceal. It was in this manner that one of the greatest Morel hunters around revealed to me the location of one of his favorite patches.

He lives in New York City but makes frequent forays into our area in the spring searching out mushrooms. Bit by bit his pride at finding a great location "under our very noses" pried loose the secret. "On the west side of the river", he said, "on a major road ... just over the county line... an abandoned apple orchard... on both sides of the road... poison ivy out the gazoo, but Morels galore." He showed photographs to prove the point; great shots of twenty or thirty big blonde Morels trooping around the base of an apple tree, with more trees and mushrooms fading into the background.

He said he would never tell anyone where it was, but already I knew the precise location, for every spring in late May and early June I make several trips to the East Branch of the Delaware River to fish for shad, and on the way, just across the county line, an abandoned apple orchard spills across the road and floods my mind with thoughts of mushrooms. I think of nothing else for the next ten miles and keep reminding myself that "next year" I should come a few weeks earlier and look for morels.

Last spring I did. I had a spring mushroom identification course in mid-May at the Arboretum and used that as an excuse to search out new sites for field trips. And so it

was that Pete Katsaros and I found ourselves poking around in the Poison Ivy of an abandoned apple orchard one weekend late in April.

The day was cool but bright. The trees were not yet in full leaf and the brightness of the noonday sun cut through their skimpy canopy with ease, causing us to squint and to walk with the sun at our backs. Because of the sun the Morels were not easy to see but they were there. The Black ones were the most prevalent, but here and there was a tree ringed with small Blondes. They seemed to occur in patches, a group here, a group there, usually around the sickliest of the trees.

We were so intent on our search that we failed to notice the owner of the orchard when he showed up. His large four-wheel vehicle appeared suddenly, jerking us both from our reverie. A shotgun hung on the gun rack behind his head, and what turned out to be a .357 Magnum lay exposed on the seat beside him. Static from his radio transmitter punctuated the silence and an eerie tension filled the air. I had a sudden desperate yearning to be fishing the Delaware even though the shad were a month downstream.

He was not an old man, middle aged at best, and yet he spoke as if he had understudied an older, southern Clint Eastwood. "What you Boys lookin' for?", he asked. "My Mama saw you two creepin' around here and called me right away." He jerked his head over his left shoulder commanding us by that gesture to look thataway. Sure enough in the middle of the hillside orchard across the road was a house and there in front of an open door was an older woman whom we took immediately to be Mama. She was watching us through a pair of binoculars. "She seen your every move", he said. "What's the matter, you can't read the 'No Trespassing' signs?"

No, we allowed, we could read the signs, but there were so few, and so old and tattered, and we didn't know where to go to ask for permission and we were just two naturalists out walking and looking at what the spring was bringing to this orchard, and that seemed harmless enough, and we were sorry to bother him and cause his mother to worry, and we were glad to see him and know that he was as interested in the land as we were, and we would be more than happy to leave right this minute and never come back, and...

Just then a hawk circling overhead issued a thin whistle. We all looked up. "Red Tail" said the man in the truck. "Yes", said Peter, "*Buteo jamaicensis*". "Oh! You two birders?" he asked with a distinctly softer tone to his voice. "Why didn't you say so before?" And the talk turned to birds, and voles, and a den of Red Foxes on the other side of the stream. And of hunters and trespassers, and DEC and toxic waste and how it was that he got out of the apple business.

Trucks, he said, would pull up in the middle of the night, just ease in off the main road

on to his work lanes in the orchard and here and there dump all manner of stuff around. That's why all of those trees were so sickly. His father, an Italian, thought the Mafia had something to do with it. The DEC closed down the orchard and the father died shortly thereafter. Now here he is with a poisoned apple orchard. He could sell the land for a housing development but would rather keep it for the Foxes.

I was almost afraid to ask him if he could remember exactly where some of the dump sites were, but I did, and he pointed out how you could tell the asbestos dumps by the mounds they made, and how some of the chemicals with the wretched names and reputations had caused the trees to get sick and die. He pointed to several places here and there around the orchard, and they were in many cases the very places we had found the Morels.

We ate none of these Morels and declined to return, even though invited. But I thought of the Buddha several times that spring as I passed on my way to the Delaware. The secret of desire, he said, is to release it. You can have anything in the world you want. The trick is not to want it.



Morchella esculenta photo: Dianna Smith

For **Part 2: An Investigation** see Dianna Smith's website, www.fungiphotos.net and also see there Bill's more recent explorations of the question of morels and toxicity of the substrate.

Rust Alert!

I'm working on a book on northeastern wildflowers and would like to show some of the ills that befall them.

Please keep an eye out for the following wildflower species that show evidence of rust and let me know the locality information:

Spring beauty (*Claytonia virginica*)

Mayapple (*Podophyllum peltatum*)

Jack-in-the-pulpit (*Arisaema triphyllum*)

Dutchman's breeches (*Dicentra cucullaria*)

Thanks, Carol Gracie
cgracie@gmail.com

Advice for Tick Control by Donald Shernoff

There is an excellent article entitled "Ticks and Lyme Disease" in the latest issue of *Mushroom the Journal*. It recommends the use of products containing permethrin to ward off ticks (and mosquitoes).

A study done by several universities in 1993 states that "Permethrin is a broad spectrum insecticide, a chemical used to kill a variety of insects. Permethrin is referred to as a synthetic pyrethroid insecticide because, while manmade, it resembles naturally-occurring chemicals with insecticidal properties, called pyrethroids. Pyrethroids are found especially in chrysanthemums and are one of the oldest classes of organic insecticides known. They work by quickly paralyzing the nervous systems of insects, producing a quick "knockdown" effect on insect pest populations. It kills adults, eggs, and larvae, and has a slight repellent effect against insects. The insecticidal activity of this material lasts up to 12 weeks after application. Permethrin has low mammalian toxicity. However, contact with eyes, skin, or clothing should be avoided and handlers of permethrin should wash thoroughly after handling."

This chemical is meant to be applied to clothing, not to the skin. According to Tickinfo.com, "Deactivation of permethrin on skin occurs in approximately 20 minutes, When placed on clothing it will last 2 to 6 weeks (even up to 1 year with special application) and will even last through weekly launderings. With the long history of success permethrin has achieved, it is best not to second guess these extraordinary results. By following the directions provided on the product you can be assured of results that achieve protection at or near 100%. Any variation of instructions that indicate using less permethrin on clothing will result in diminished performance. Follow the direction exactly and you will be amazed at the performance of this product."

Permethrin is sold by several names as a spray. The product names are: Permanone Tick/Mosquito Repellent, Coulston Duranon Odorless Tick/Mosquito Repellent and Sawyer Tick/Mosquito Aerosol Permethrin Repellent. They may be available in some stores that sell insect repellent. The on-line price for a 6 ounce spray can is \$6.95.

One can also buy clothing that has been treated with permethrin. There are sites on the web that advertise a whole line of clothing, from hats to socks. (Google permethrin.) Camping stores may stock them. Such clothing would be a boon to people who spend a lot of time outdoors such as foragers, fishermen, hunters and gardeners. It offers a much higher level of protection than deet compounds, and is safer.

Mushroom University

Thirteen COMA members have recently completed our third annual Mushroom University class, given by Gary Lincoff and hosted by Dianna Smith at her home. See photo on back cover.

This year's topic was the Russulales which include the genus *Russula* and the genus *Lactarius*. Later this spring the class will go on 2 walks to collect *Lactarius* and *Russula*, and we hope we will be able to help with identifications of species in these genera at the COMA foray.

Look at the *Lactarius* tutorial Dianna has on her website, www.fungiphotos.net, to see some of the species we encounter in our area. Thank you, Dianna, for all your help in making education a prime goal of our COMA activities.

Rena Wertzer

NEMF: the NorthEast Mycological Federation

This is probably the largest and arguably the most exciting mushroom club group in North America, founded in 1976 to "stimulate interest in mycology and to provide a forum where both amateur and professional mycologists can share their experiences and knowledge and work together cooperatively in studying the fungal flora of Northeastern America for scientific and educational purposes."

There are no dues; everyone is welcome at the big annual foray that is hosted by one or more of the 18 clubs currently in the federation, ranging from Canada down to Pennsylvania: the BMC Boston Mycological Club, CMM Cercle des Mycologues de Montreal, CNYMS Central New York Mycological Society, COMA Connecticut-Westchester Mycological Association, CVMS Connecticut Valley Mycological Society, EPM Eastern Pennsylvania Mushroomers, LIMC Long Island Mycological Club, MHMA Mid Hudson Mycological Association, MMA Maine Mycological Association, MMC Montshire Mycological Club, MMU Monadnock Mushroomers Unlimited, MYMS Mid York Mycological Society, NHMS New Hampshire Mycological Society, NJMA New Jersey Mycological Association, NYMS New York Mycological Society, RAMA Rochester Area Mycological Association, SVMS Susquehanna Valley Mycological Society, WPMC Western Pennsylvania Mushroom Club.

There is an 8-year rotation of hosting clubs, e.g., 2000 & 2008: Connecticut Valley Mushroom Society; 2001 & 2009: Boston Mushroom Club; 2002 & 2010: COMA, LIMC, MHMA, NYMS. Each annual foray is scheduled Thu afternoon through Sun morning and provides lots of options for attendees: mushroom hunts, workshops, lectures, mycophagy, socials, making new friends... and the opportunity to meet and learn from visiting mycologists. When your club is a host, volunteer for a job. Also, attend the previous foray to observe.

This is a message to all members of COMA, LIMC, MHMA, NYMS: do come to the 2009 foray on Cape Cod (the exciting details online: www.nemf.org/ > menu > 2009) and please volunteer to work for and at the 2010 foray—contact Dianna Smith, 2010 foray chair: <mailto:diannasmith@optonline.net>.

Working for and at a NEMF foray is enormously gratifying. Trust me. I have done it many times, in many years, in many different ways. As a member of both COMA and NYMS, I pledge to help doubly hard this and next year, for doubling my pleasure. And I am looking forward to seeing many of you at both forays.

Ursula Hoffmann

NEMF webmaster since 2002 and current president of NEMF



Thanks to Our Members for Taking the Initiative to Lead COMA Walks

by JJ Murphy

A HUGE SHOUT OUT to the 25 COMA members who stepped up to lead COMA walks during this 2009 season. As I studied the calendar in my first year coordinating the COMA Walk schedule, I realized that we had lost many valuable leaders. Some people have moved away, some have health challenges, some cannot predict their work schedules this year.

In addition to the members who are leading more than two walks, we have six members who have taken the initiative to investigate new walk sites, which they have offered to lead.

A full calendar, complete with new walk sites, as well as old favorites, ensures COMA's vitality. We have superb leadership and a wealth of knowledge that I have found priceless. COMA is special because we are friendly, share our knowledge and support each other through the learning process. It took me 10 years to find COMA; most of the experienced mycologists I approached for mentorship were either paranoid or militant. COMA is a refreshing change.

If I haven't said it clearly enough, THANK YOU, BLESSINGS, and my sincere wishes for a bountiful mushroom season to our walk leaders for their support of COMA.

---As well as being COMA's walk schedule coordinator, JJ Murphy, www.WriterByNature.com, is a freelance nature writer, photographer, and a passionate aspiring mycologist.

Maggots in Your Mushrooms

by Michael Miller

Just because something comes from a can or jar does not mean it is totally free of contaminants. The Food and Drug Administration sanctions food products to be safe for eating, but it does allow for a certain level of contaminants in what is considered safe. In canned mushrooms you may have "over 20 or more maggots of any size per 100 grams of drained mushrooms and proportionate liquid," writes E. J. Levy, or "five or more maggots two millimeters or longer per 100 grams of drained mushrooms and proportionate liquid" or an "average of 75 mites" before provoking action by the F.D.A. (FDA booklet as quoted by E.J. Levy *NY Times* 2/14/09).

According to Levy, the F.D.A. justifies its policy on economic and aesthetic grounds. What doesn't harm us may go under the radar. What is deemed harmful to the public is subject to political pressure based on the latest scare such as our recent discovery of salmonella in processed peanuts. We have become somewhat more lax in recent years under the influence of the last administration. "Bugs in our food may not be so bad—many people in the world practice entomophagy [and mycophagy]" (Levy). While we should be aware that there might be all kinds of things in the mushrooms we eat from the local woods, eating approved products that have been packaged and approved by the F.D.A. may not be safer.

Mushroom University Class of 2009 *photo by Howard Smith*



Inserts Enclosed:

Walk Schedule
COMA foray application

**! DEADLINE FOR SUMMER ISSUE
June 1, 2009 !!!**

**Please note that all members are
receiving a hard copy of this issue
because of the inserted walk schedule.
Future issues will be electronic for
those who prefer it.**

Make sure we have your email address.

COMA
8 Coralyn Road
Scarsdale, NY 10583

