

earthstar examiner

June 2008

Newsletter of the Missouri Mycological Society



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PHOTOS BY PATRICK HARVEY

Morel Madness 2008: A French Perspective

by *Françoise Chabot*
translated by Pat Lennon

In the US they don't gather mushrooms—they hunt them! I'm going to tell you about the great springtime morel hunt in Missouri that I participated in this spring. Pat and I went there together, and I can assure you that it was really something.

Willie, the organizer and chief scout for this event, had gone all over the map in the preceding days to look for promising signs of morels at several possible hunting grounds to pinpoint the best places to hunt. He's a scholar of morels and the science of finding them. He frequently talks to the trees like you and I do. He seems to know everything about morels. They find pretty much the same kinds of

morels that we do, including the *semilibera*, which they call peckerhead, "*tête de zizi*".

I'll describe the hunt a little later. I want to paint a picture of the forest for you. From a distance, the hunting grounds with their occasionally steep slopes look like one of our normal forests. But up close, I was amazed and delighted by the variety of trees. Some are familiar to us, like some oaks and ash trees. But then there is a whole crowd of trees totally unknown to us, like the hackberry with a strange bark, the hickory (a kind of wild nut which I brought back with me), the

continued on next page



Madness 2008

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cottonwood which I think is in the poplar family, sycamores, and the wild and beautiful purple flowered redbud tree. Even the oaks—I think there is at least a dozen different kinds here—can be surprising: I saw one with strange bark and red leaves just starting to open. And another tree, the dogwood, looks like a snow cloud in the forest with its white flowers. Another tree, whose name I wasn't certain of, had huge garnet/burgundy colored seed pods with a greenish jelly inside which smelled of coffee! Yet another had two inch long thorns like a tree with barbed wire! And here, imagine, the persimmon trees grow wild! A club member brought a cake that she made with wild persimmons which was delicious.

Enough for the trees, here are some plants. There were blue tufts of phlox, bluebells which have clusters of bell shaped flowers which can be from pinkish colored to the tenderest blue, lemon-yellow violets, and may apples, a sort of enormous waxy green umbrella leaf sheltering a large white flower shaped something like a too big buttercup. There were others, finely serrated like lace, or small yellow bells whose name I forget, and pretty little clusters of white flowers with pink veins, *Claytonia virginica* . . . The flowers were wonderful.

So this Morel Madness isn't just an outing in a forest: It's a whole weekend! The Missouri Mycological Society rented a group campsite in the Mark Twain Lake State Park, to the northwest of St. Louis. There were several buildings including a professional kitchen, large dining space, dormitories for guys, gals, and couples, and showers/toilets. And all this in the woods next to a lake!

We arrived Friday evening, checked into our dorm, then arrived in the dining room where everyone had put out food, usually homemade, including soups, salads, cooked food, cheeses, desserts, wines, and breads. I met a lot of very friendly people, even some who spoke French to make me feel at ease. I talked mushrooms with Jay, a mycologist, with Pat translating. He fetched some books to aid in the discussion. I learned that there are none of St George's *tricholomas* there! This is surprising as we normally find them (and eat them) along with our morels. After dinner Dr Johann Bruhn of the University of Missouri at Columbia gave a very interesting talk with slides about research which he and his wife, Dr Jeanne Mihail, have been doing on local truffles and morels. He



also speaks French very well.

The next morning arrived pretty early: Breakfast was at 6:30. And what a breakfast they make in the USA! There was enough food for a regiment; especially good were the biscuits prepared by the smiling chef. I think he cooks with his smile.

Now, on to hunting morels! Some folks opted to stay and hunt in nearby woods, and the rest drove east with Willie. The land went from nearly flat to very hilly as we arrived at the Dupont State Conservation Area. Willie gave us brief instructions then led us into the woods, offering advice (like check out that ash tree over there) and encouragement as we spread out over the hillside. The directions were simple enough: Look around the ash trees and dead elms, and glance at the oaks too. As soon as you see one, scan around for more, the first one won't run away, so grab it by the leg and cut away any dirt. People started finding morels right away and so did

I, especially the *semilibera*, but other kinds too. We moved to another area, the Anderson State Conservation Area, which was also pretty productive. Everyone stopped for picnic lunches at an overlook where we could see a great panoramic view of the Mississippi River. Then some people returned to the campsite, and a few of the crazy went morel hunting again (I'm in this group). At last we headed back to the campsite. I was really tired. People were counting and measuring their morels.

The dinner was like the night before, but with more people and even more food. After dinner, Willie announced prizes! The person who collected the most morels became the King, Patrick Harvey. I was surprised to find myself Queen for my sixty some morels. Pat Lennon found the largest morel. The smallest morel was discovered by Tina Pfeiffer. The prettiest morel was found by Cheryl DeCain. Instead of the traditional most ticks award, this year the judges decided to honor Mike Perks with the Most Tickets award, which had something to do with a traffic ticket. Most of us would probably rather have the ticks.

Chris Crabtree, a graduate student at the University of Central Missouri, delivered an engaging talk about the *myxomycetes* and macrofungi he has observed at Ha Ha Tonka State Park. Some hardy people then started playing guitars, but I was too tired from my day of hiking and jet lag to stay up any longer.

The next day there was going to be another foray, but we had to get back to St Louis for an invitation later that day. I'm sure more morels were found. The whole weekend was great: Friendly and interesting people, lots of morels to be found, and many new things to learn about mushrooms, trees and plants. I hope to participate again in the Morel Madness.

Madness 2008: Another Perspective

by Patrick Harvey

I'm finally able to take paid vacation time at work, so I took Friday off to do some "scouting" for Morel Madness.

Unfortunately, I took the river route up to Louisiana on the way to Mark Twain Lake.

Pioneer Slough: flooded. Canon Conservation Area: flooded. Ted Shanks: inaccessible, Highway 79 flooded. So I went on to the lake. A quick hike near Buzzard's Roost turned up nothing. There had been a burn there last year so it was easy to see anything that turned up there. I went to the north shore of the lake and sat out a thunderstorm at the boat ramp—it was amazing watching most of the storm blow through to the south.

I headed into the woods on a trail near there, and finally found what we've all been looking for—morels! Half-free, true, but they were growing in amazing numbers almost directly on the trail. I came back to camp with 45 that did not count towards the Madness total, but rest assured I had plans for them. We heard a wonderful talk on the biology of morel fruiting presented by Johann Bruhn, and partook in a wonderful potluck. Even if one took only a bit of this and a little of that, your plate was full before sampling half of the marvelous dishes there. Maxine's chocolate mints were great, Shannon's chili had a good bite, and I heard good things being said about my wife Donna's potato, chanterelle and morel soup (see recipe on page 6).

Saturday, most of us went with Willie to the Anderson conservation area to check out some of his better places. I did not find anything to speak of on the first outing, two yellows, but (the other) Patrick's friend Francoise found a nice patch of half-free, and also the first morel of the day, a nice-sized black. We hunted to the end of a ridge and down into the valley and back.

Next, we went further up the road, and began one of Willie's famous blitzkrieg forays, charging up and over ridge after ridge, in search of our elusive prey.

I was most impressed by the M.D.C. photographer's persistence—he kept up with all of us while hauling more than 25 pounds of camera equipment! I was still

not finding much in the way of morels, when I saw our fearless leader walk right past a large ash tree on a ridge top without looking around it. I checked it out, and saw one ... then three more ... then another, and another yellow, for a total of 10 under that one tree. Thanks, Willie!

It got better after that. We found a line of ash trees on the next ridge that had a good number of them also. The funniest part of the expedition was right after we took a group photo with all 25 of us on a huge fallen log ... Patrick bent over and found a large morel right where we all were sitting!

I then took Sharon and Cheryl out to the "spot" I had found by the lake, which was a much easier walk, though I heard a few comments of "Oh sure, they're right over there, not much of a hike at ALL..." But then we reached the spot, a half-open meadow with hickory trees and a few oaks, and we all started finding patch-essal over the hillside. I found 45 more there, Sharon found a basketful, and Cheryl about the same. After that, I heard, "This is what morelling is all about!"

We came back to camp for the main festivities, and with the bounty of half-frees I had found, was lucky enough to win the Most Morels award. Shannon also slightly renamed an award to reflect another member's experience that day—the category was changed from "Most Ticks" to "Most Tickets", for Mike Perk's traffic citation. Personally, I think that just shows his dedication to The Hunt!

Chris Crabtree spoke about his project cataloguing plant and fungi species at Ha Ha Tonka, which was very informative. He was lucky enough to find a new species variant of false truffle there, and also determined some correlations between plant species, fungi, and habitat. And dinner that night was even better!

Next day, I went back by way of the other side of the river. I made a stop in Hannibal and toured Cameron's Cave (on the other side of the valley from Mark Twain Cave). A young kid came along with the guide and me, and on the way in we saw some morel stumps, so after we came out we searched the other side of the trail for a few minutes. We found about half a dozen morels in 10 minutes, so I think I've created another morel maniac! A great ending for a memorable Madness.



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Since 2002 the Missouri Mycological Society has been a proud member of Earth Share of Missouri, an organization that represents 71 other local, regional, national and international non-profit organizations. Earth Share's principal mission is fundraising via workplace-giving campaigns which enables more people to support environmental causes in an easy highly efficient way. Check out their website at www.earthsharemo.org

The Missouri Mycological Society is also a member of NAMA, the North American Mycological Association, which is a non-profit organization of amateur and professional mycologists with more than 60 affiliated local mycological clubs throughout North America. NAMA's mission is "to promote, pursue, and advance the science of mycology." To become a member of NAMA yourself, check out their website at www.namyco.org



noteworthy

Société Mycologique de France

by Patrick Lennon

An article in the NAMA Newsletter last fall by Anatheia Brooks stimulated my interest in connecting with French mycolophiles during my stay in Paris last fall. Being a member of the *Société Mycologique de France*, she kindly gave me some information about current activities of the SMF. One was a mushroom fair, *l'Exposition de Champignons* at the Parc Floral, near the *Chateau de Vincennes* on the eastern edge of Paris. I took the *Métro* out there on the day the Mushroom Fair opened, and located the building in the park where it was taking place.

They had a highly organized and beautiful display of more than 400 different identified mushrooms on a series of tables. There was a lot of natural decoration with leaves, stacks of vegetables and fruits, tufts of moss and garlands of flowers. There was also a nice display in the middle of the room featuring real stumps with mushrooms, live plants and a decaying log. And the mushrooms! There were fresh specimens of *Boletus edulis*, *Lepista nuda*, *Grifola frondosa*, *Hydnum repandum*, and *Fistulina hepatica*. I counted 36 different russulas, 24 different boletes, 27 different lactarius, and 41 cortinari on that first day. All these mushrooms were found in the region around Paris in the preceding two or three days. People complained that the weather had been very dry since August, and said that

over 600 mushrooms had been found and identified last year for the same event.

They had a nice system using a laser printer to print out identification cards for the display, including latin and common names and edibility from a computer menu. Colorful posters were placed above tables describing features of the genus, including chemical reactions and microscopic details. There were interesting displays comparing different species which might be look-alikes, and mushrooms with different scents. It was an impressive effort and a magnificent display of mushrooms.

As it was still a weekday, there were not yet a lot of people viewing the display. However, the people who were there had a healthy curiosity and asked questions of the SMF people. Many more people viewed the exposition during the weekend.

The SMF offers a large number of forays during the course of the year. On weekends, as many as three forays might take place on the same day. Many of these are accessible by public transport out of Paris, usually after a short train ride. The region around Paris features substantial forests in every direction, some of which were forests or preserves of former royalty. These forests are now public land, and are often near public transport. So with a lot of organized forays, a lot of mushrooms can be collected over a weekend.

The SMF has "meetings" on Monday afternoon into the early evening which consist of identifying and displaying specimens collected on the weekend. The SMF has the ground and first floors of a building in the 12th Arrondissement in Paris.

On the ground floor, there are rows and rows of display tables for mushrooms. They have a small room with dozens of chemical reagents and solutions for mushroom identification (which are sold to members for their use), a more formal area with rows of chairs for meeting, an extensive set of maps on the wall, and a computer setup for printing mushroom identification cards.

On the next floor is an extensive library of mycological and botanical journals and books, including a room devoted to rare and precious books, some dating back over 200 years. They have some gorgeous volumes of old mushroom books, illustrated with several color printing. One impressive volume, *Herbier de France*, by Bulliard, was published in 1792. I also saw reports from the Missouri Botanical Garden dating back into the 1890's.

In addition to this extensive setup, they have a number of members with impressive knowledge of mushrooms not to mention other things found in the woods. The *Société Mycologique de France* is a really excellent mushroom club!

Chanterelle-Potato Soup

by Donna Harvey

Serves 2

2 large potatoes, peeled and cubed
1/2 cup chanterelles broken into small pieces
Dash nutmeg
Salt and Pepper to taste
1/4 cup + 1 tbsp butter or olive oil
1/2 cup sweet onion (preferably Vidalia), diced
1/4 cup flour
4 cups milk/cream
1/2 cup shredded white cheddar (optional), divided

Boil the potatoes in salted (optional) water until tender.

While potatoes are cooking, saute the chanterelles, at medium temperature, in 1 tbsp of olive oil or butter, for about 10 minutes. Add nutmeg when nearly done.

When potatoes are tender, drain off most of the water. Use a masher to break them into small chunks. Add mushrooms and milk. Return to stove on LOW heat. Bring to a simmer.

While heating soup, heat 1/4 cup butter or oil. Do not let the butter brown. Add the onion and saute until translucent and soft. Add flour and scallion powder and stir. Cook for several minutes, until golden brown and quite thick.

By this time, the soup should be simmering nicely. Add the flour mixture to the soup and stir. The soup should thicken, as the flour mix is absorbed. Season with salt and pepper as desired.

Ladle into dishes. Sprinkle with cheese. Serve with a good "crusty bread" and salad. Enjoy!

Mushroom Classes!

by Maxine Stone

Again MOMS is offering Mushroom Identification classes. There are 4 in all and the one on Poisonous Mushrooms was already offered in March.

Each class has a presentation by the instructor and field experience in the form of a foray. Each class also has take-home study work for you to complete in your own time, if you so desire. There is also an optional test on the classroom experience.

For each class completed, homework approved, and test taken you will receive a beautiful award pin. It is not necessary to complete all four classes but for those who do, you will be awarded the Harry Thiers Certificate of Achievement. You will also walk away with a lot more knowledge about fungi.

Saturday June 14: Common Mushrooms of Missouri I
Saturday, August 16: Common Mushrooms of Missouri II
Saturday, October 11: Common Edible Mushrooms of Missouri

All classes are held at Babler State Park Visitor's Center and will begin at 10:00. We will break for lunch (byo) and then foray for fungi. You may retake any class if you wish—the more participants the better. And if you're like me, repetition is good.

Instructors will be Brad Bomanz and Maxine Stone. Please contact one of them if you would like more information or would like to register for one or more of these classes. They are free to all MOMS members

Brad Bomanz 636-225-0555 bbomanz@yahoo.com
Maxine Stone 314-963-0280 VeryMaxine@aol.com

Sweat 'n' Chanterelles

by David Yates

July 13th - 14th
Babler State Park

Come join MOMS for a weekend of chanterelle hunting, food & merriment. It's usually hot, hot, hot, so come prepared for the weather! We've reserved the Special Use Area at Babler State Park for the entire weekend. It's a beautiful, secluded spot. There is ample room for up to 20 members, but only tent camping is available.

Rough Schedule

Friday – Arrive before the park gates close at 9:00 pm. Find your way to the Special Use Area off the general camp grounds (it is well marked). Join us for food, drinks and maybe some music. The entire weekend is potluck, so bring your favorite summertime recipe. Sharing is encouraged!

Saturday Morning – Let's start with breakfast. For everyone coming for the day, meet us at 9:00 by the Visitor Center. We'll drive to some good spots and hunt a few hours, looking for just about anything that's fruiting. Hopefully most of what we get is chanterelles. Other summer edibles and some interesting things are out there.

Saturday Afternoon – Following lunch (potluck once again) and a mushroom identifying session, at the Alta Shelter, we'll hunt some more, and see what else the park has to offer. There's a pool at Babler, so bring your suits. Also, the park roads are excellent for bike riding, if you're so inclined (pun intended... these hills are steep)!

The Rest of the Weekend – Everyone is welcome to stay well into the afternoon and even camp an additional night. Enjoy the park & find your own secret hunting areas!

Directions - Babler State Park is at 800 Guy Park Drive in Wildwood, Missouri.

- From I-44, take Exit 264 onto Highway 109. Go 8 miles north to Route BA. Hang a left and go 2 miles. The park entrance is on your left.
- From I-40, take the Long Road exit near Chesterfield. Head south 1 mile to Wild Horse Creek Road. Turn right and go 3 miles to Highway 109. Turn left and travel less than a mile to Route BA. Turn right and head about 1.5 miles to the park entrance.

Save the Date — Mingo 2008!

Thursday, September 18 – Sunday September 21

by Maxine Stone

Word has it that Mingo 2008 is going to be fabulous. (We, who go every year, already know that. It is always a fabulous week end.) Honestly, I think that Mingo 2008 is really going to be the best ever! Of course, every year is always the best ever!).

Actually, I am quite serious. We have a fantastic line-up of speakers. The weather IS going to cooperate so that our forays into the woods are productive. Our volunteers are eager and to satisfy all of your needs. And you, my dear friends, will be there to offer good conversation and friendship to one another. What is better than that?

For those of you that are new to MOMS or have never been to our Annual Fall Foray at Mingo, here is a bit of information:

- We stay at Girl Scout Camp Latonka in either screened cabins or in tents. There is also a small motel nearby if you happen to like creature comforts such as a shower and toilet in your room. Camp Latonka is near Poplar Bluff on Lake Wapapello
- Friday activities are often relaxed and informal. We can visit local natural areas, or stay back and relax at the camp for the day. It all depends on the preference of each individual.
- Saturday we spend the day foraging at Mingo Wildlife Refuge. Mingo National Wildlife Refuge encompasses 21,592 acres, and is the largest remnant of bottomland hardwoods remaining in the Missouri bootheel. The refuge contains approximately 15,000 acres of bottomland hardwoods, 1,000 acres of upland hardwoods, and 5,000 acres of marsh and water. There are seven natural areas on the refuge and over 140 identified archaeological sites. In 1976, 7,730 acres were designated as a wilderness area. This is a gorgeous place and if there is enough moisture this fall, mushrooms will be abundant!
- Dinner Thursday night and Friday night are pot luck. Lunch Friday is on your own. Saturday lunch, Saturday dinner, and breakfast on both Saturday and Sunday are provided. There is also a Mycophagy Tasting on Sunday morning at about 11:00 that is always unbelievably delicious.
- Our speakers this year will be outstanding, as usual. I can't divulge who they are at this time, but I assure you, you will not be disappointed.

The registration form for Mingo '08 will be in the August Earthstar, but make sure you mark your calendar NOW. If you should have any questions, suggestions or would like to volunteer, please contact Maxine Stone at VeryMaxine@aol.com or Charlie Raiser at CharlieRaiser@aol.com

MOMS 2008 Calendar

- Sat. 6/14** 10:00 AM **Class. Common Mushrooms of Missouri, Part 1.**
- 6/20-6/22** **Foray Weekend @ Ha Ha Tonka State Park.** Shannon Stevens, 314-481-4131; sporeprince@sbcglobal.net.
- Sat. 7/5** 10:00 AM - **Foray @ Forest 44.** Steve Booker, 618-346-1740; AROHD2@aol.com.
- Tues. 7/8** 7:00 PM - **Bimonthly.** Ken Gilberg, 314-629-4686; kengilberg@charter.net.
- 7/11-7/13** **Foray Weekend, Sweat 'n Chanterelles.** Babler State Park. Maxine Stone, 314-963-0280; verymaxine@aol.com
- Sun. 7/20** 10:00 AM - **Foray @ Castlewood State Park.** John Davis, (w): 314-302-6939, (h): 314-909-0272; shrooman@sbcglobal.net.
- Sat. 7/26** 10:00 AM - **Forest 44.** Maxine Stone, 314-963-0280; verymaxine@aol.com.
- Sat. 8/2** 10:00 AM - **Foray @ Cave Winery.** Gary Steps, 314-968-9345; gsteps@mind-spring.com.
- Sat. 8/16** 10:00 AM - **Class. Common Mushrooms of Missouri, Part 2.**
- Tues. 9/9** 7:00 PM - **Bimonthly.** Ken Gilberg, 314-629-4686; kengilberg@charter.net.
- 9/18-9/21** **Foray Weekend @ Mingo.** (Save the date).
- Fri. 10/12** 10:00 AM - **Foray @ Hazlett State Park, Carlyle Lake (IL).** Leland Von Behren, 618-259-8517.
- 10/24-10/26** **Foray Weekend @ Hawn Park.** Save the date.
- Sat. 11/2** 11:00 AM - **Foray & Potluck, Wild Times @ Babler.** Steve Booker, 618-346-1740; AROHD2@aol.com; Jan Simons, 314-773-4551; jansimons@mobot.org.

MOMS members will need to notify the leader of the foray they wish to attend *before the evening prior to the foray at the very latest.* Please meet at the Visitor's Center, unless otherwise specified, 15 minutes prior to the time listed.

Nothing Stays the Same

We all would like to give a million thanks to Julie Ridge. She has tirelessly been our Earthstar Editor/Designer for 6 years! At this time, however, Julie has decided that at with her not so new blended family and her work schedule, she is on over-load—and this means that she will no longer be doing our newsletter. We thank you, Julie, from the bottom of our hearts, for working so hard to make our Earthstar a top notch publication.

Now we all would like to thank Jane House for stepping forward. Jane will be our new Earthstar Designer. With Jane's outstanding graphic design skills we know the Earthstar will be in good hands.

And we also would like to thank Maxine Stone. Maxine has agreed to be our Earthstar Editor. **That means all articles will now be sent to Maxine at VeryMaxine@aol.com.**

Thank you, thank you and thank you

Deadline for next Earthstar: July 1, 2008



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