

earthstar examiner

June 2007

Newsletter of the Missouri Mycological Society



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PHOTOS BY MARINE STONE

MADNESS 2007 (*Appropriately Named*)

by Shannon Stevens

Hopes were high as folks started trickling in for the annual event. The rain that had plagued the previous weekend's festivities was nowhere in sight, the sun was out and the temperatures were ideal. Unfortunately, it's just not that simple of an equation to find morels! Despite the current conditions that pointed to a possible boon of overloaded baskets, the freeze that hit in the middle of what was an early start to the season seemed to have brought everything to an abrupt halt or at least severely stunted the growth of our quarry.

The consensus, given the conflicting signs, low numbers and small size of morels actually found,

was that if the season was to start up again or continue, (and it did by all reports), we were actually about a week early... of course. What a shame, I really was looking forward to powering up my new super-duper Excalibur 2900, 10 tray, rear-fan food dehydrator. The thing kinda scares me, it has a setting on the dial for 'Living Foods', what the heck is that? Oh well, in the box it remained, sitting in the corner of the lodge, its potential untapped. I can only hope that instead of seasoning it with the smell of morels, chanterelles will have to do!

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MADNESS 2007

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Anyway, back to the story. The park ranger who opened things up for us (I forget her name but she was very helpful) informed me that we were the first group of the year to use the camp and that if we encountered any "problems" to let her know right away. That didn't take long. Apparently, it's always the first group to get all the grief! I won't complain too much however, as all the leaky pipes in the world couldn't dampen our fun for what was otherwise a gorgeous weekend.

Mike and I arrived first with Steve and Willie showing up shortly after. Steve of course already had a handful of morels he had sweet-talked Mother Nature out of and Willie was dressed in camouflage after a morning turkey hunt. My thanks to Mike for gathering and hauling all the paper-goods needed for the weekend, your efforts are greatly appreciated and the introduction of timers for the coffee pots was a stroke of genius! Much thanks also to Tina Pfeiffer for doing the registration which went smoothly mainly due to the nice layout she did on her computer.

Speaking of registration, we had a total of forty-two attendees during the weekend including new members: Bill Pratt, Karen King and the Teoh family, Kuan, Heidi and Garrett. Welcome to the club y'all. I hope you had a good time and I hope we see you again real soon. Chris Crabtree made it for the weekend and, as always, it was a pleasure to have Jay Justice with us.

Friday and Saturday nights we enjoyed the usual MOMS cocktail hour which melded into the usual MOMS potluck dinner. By "usual," of course I mean overflowing tables full of unusually scrumptious fare. I did not make any notes on what exactly was offered, suffice it to say it was all extremely delicious and the variety of soups, salads, pickled this and that, mushroom dishes and wild game was truly overwhelming. Good thing there was plenty of vino to wash it all down with, including homemade wine brought by Steve Booker that I believe his brother made. I apologize for my lack of specificity on the names and suppliers of the dishes, next time I'll take better notes.

We were indeed lucky to have two very hard working individuals taking the helm for our breakfasts. Angelika Kamler took a break from her beautiful new home in Excello, MO to provide us with a hearty meal on Saturday, and Julie Ridlon took time out from her busy



PHOTOS BY MAXINE STONE

schedule to tantalize our taste buds with a marvelous meal on Sunday morning. Thank you both for all your hard work and thanks also to the folks that helped with the preparations and cleanup.

Lois Walsh was our speaker on Friday night and she shared with us with her award-winning slide presentation entitled "The Mushroom Man." This, as we later came to realize, was a brief look at the mushroom hunting habits of her husband Joe. Joe fully expounded on that theme with his presentation on Saturday night entitled, "The Morels of Dearcy Branch Creek Farm." (Forgive me Joe if I didn't quite get that right.) All I can say about that slide presentation is WOW! Lois really did hit the nail on the head when she said you take

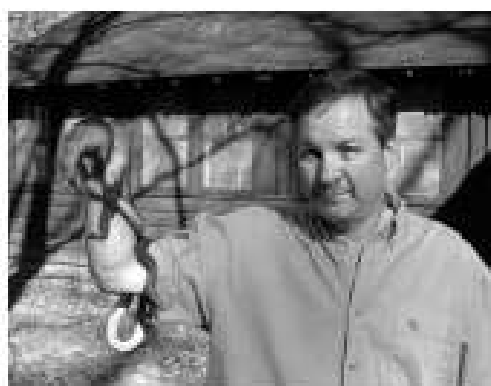
copious notes when you're in the field.

What a treat that was! Who knew Joe had such a wealth of information stashed away. The slides and corresponding notes were a compilation of Joe's sixty years of mushrooming, specifically focusing on observations from his family's farm where he started hunting as a boy. I cannot begin to articulate what a privilege it was to have Joe share these memories and moments with us, not to mention the incredibly interesting scientific knowledge gained from those experiences. I really was awed by it and can tell you truthfully that I was reminded very much of Aldo Leopold's famous book *A Sand County Almanac*. My own observations pale in comparison but my interest in the whole subject matter has

been rejuvenated. Folks, don't miss the opportunity to share this if Joe ever grants us another audience, which I hope he does soon. You will be amazed by the sheer scope of the "project" and thrilled with the wonderful pictures he has included. Copious notes, indeed!

Somewhere between the fantastic food, wonderful wine and Joe's awesome presentation on Saturday night, awards were given out by Willie. Patrick Lennon wrested the coveted title of King from Steve Booker for coming back with most morels but Steve in turn was granted temporary Emperor status for his selfless leadership skills, helping other folks find their share. This, by the way, included a photographer from the *Post-Dispatch* who went out with his group on Saturday. I hope you all caught that article. Jane House was crowned Queen and I believe she also received the much debated and hotly contested 'Prettiest Morel' award, brought back by popular demand. Jay Justice didn't go home empty handed as he won the 'Largest Morel' award and Maxine Stone took the prize for 'Smallest Morel'. Congratulations to all the winners as well as the participants.

Final thanks to everyone who offered a helping hand during the weekend. There is always so much to do and the devil truly is in the details. Thanks to all who helped set up food and tables, washed and dried dishes, cooked, swept, mopped and took out the trash. Thanks also to Kevin Creely for the wonderful fire both nights and to our extemporaneous musicians at said fire, as well as the beautiful harp music by Patrick Harvey at the dining lodge. Super kudos to Willie for co-chairing the whole event and hooking us up with maps and insight. I had a groovy time, especially playing Quiddler with my fellow "dorktionaries"! Let's do it again next year!!!



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.

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Recent Forays & Events

First Annual Leland Von Behren Morel Festival

Sixteen of us endured the harsh weather of cold, wind and rain, and very few morels. But we enjoyed a very intimate weekend amongst old friends.

Friday afternoon four diehards found four grays under a dead elm on top of a north slope while road hunting. The rest of the walk proved fruitless but we did a little "Dead Elm 101" to brush up on important morel finding skills.

Steve Booker built a fire in the massive dining room fireplace and stoked it all weekend with the wood he split and brought to keep us warm. We only had seven campers staying the night in camp, so a few of us took advantage of the fireplace and slept in the dining hall. Two couples stayed at the lodge in real comfort. We ate—imagine that!—the most scrumptious food under the watchful



ON THE OCCASION OF THE LELAND VON BEHREN FORAY AT PERE MARQUETTE PARK APRIL 6, 7, and 8, 2007

The members, officers, and directors of the Missouri Mycological Society suspend our usual socializing with friends, finding mushrooms, and consuming delicacies. We suspend these activities to acknowledge the important role of Leland Von Behren in helping us learn how to pursue them.

Leland Von Behren taught us how to socialize and how to be friendly using a simple and time-honored method: he demonstrated the ways to be a good friend. His patience is admired and valued. His positive attitude has encouraged many of us to search just one more hillside in our forays, to look around just one more tree, and to brush aside just one more pile of leaves. His dry humor has provided us with everything from wry smiles to roaring laughter.

Leland demonstrated that it takes just a few things to find mushrooms: long legs, keen eyes, and time—much time—in the woods. He also taught us that finding mushrooms is less than half the battle; the real trick is to identify them. Leland usually identifies mushrooms from ten or more yards distance. Sometimes he doesn't shout their names, preferring that we get close, observe every detail, use keys, and go laboriously through the whole process that Leland did in a moment of a distance. Leland can almost identify mushrooms without even seeing them, provided he knows the time

of year it is and in which kind of habitat they were found.

Leland usually just laughs along with others, even when the joke is on him. Once in a while, Leland will offer a line that you'd better listen to hear. Sometimes he casts his humor as a question, and when a listener tries to think of the answer, he laughs. One such occasion came at Mingo, 2006. It was a dry year, and nobody expected to find many mushrooms. A walk had just begun, and Leland looked across a clearing where another mushroomer was striding meaningfully, eyes intent and hands poised to snatch any fungus that came into sight. As Leland sized up the situation, he asked one of his questions, "Is that guy going to walk past those Sparassis?" He had recognized what was going on, determined the solution to the problem, and in passing had identified the genus of the mushrooms the innocent forayer had passed by! We called the oversight to his attention, and then later enjoyed watching him return to the vehicles with two prime specimens which added to our mycophagy on Sunday morning.

We thank Leland Von Behren for being our long-time foray leader, our effective teacher, and most of all, our good friend. What a pleasure to participate in a foray not only led by Leland, but named for him as well.

—Charlie Raiser

Trees, Fungi and the Web of Life

by Ken Gilberg



eyes of Kitchen Captain Mike Perks and what seemed like an hourly food extravaganza by Julie Riedon and the rest of our gourmet postluck preparing campers. Puzzles, games, sing-alongs and mushroom stories around the warmth of the roaring fireplace kept us entertained. It was a very relaxing weekend for everyone. I'd compare it to a retreat.

Gordon White led Leland's honoring festivities on Friday night, Saturday after lunch and again Saturday night when Shirley his wife arrived. Charlie Raiser had prepared a wonderful speech, both humorous and touching. A copy is enclosed for everyone to enjoy. We then honored Leland by telling our stories of the wonderful times we have spent in the woods with our eldest member and presented him with a special t-shirt that Ken had put much thought in designing. We have a few left for sale at \$7 each.

On Saturday morning around 10:30AM the rain let up a little and five of us braved the drizzle, 20 mph wind and soggy hills for a hike to find one *Morchella semilibra* and one *Gyromitra caroliniana*. Patrick Harvey showed up with five grays he found on the way to our campsite. Leland led a foray that afternoon and another four hardy morel maniacs hiked with him. Steve Booker gets the prize for most half-free morels (25) and for not letting a 8' fence with razor wire deter him from picking them. (Ask him about that adventure sometime). One more foray with five crazy morel seekers went out once again late in the afternoon without luck, as I remember.

Sunday morning was just beautiful—birds singing, sunny skies, no wind and warmer temps. So a little hike was in order. Thirteen more grays were found. We intend to make this an annual event as long as we can get a group campsite. We all hope you can join us next year or in the years to come. You'll find this park well worth getting to know if you are a serious or just-for-fun morel hunter. I had a great time planning it and had the right people getting it all organized and making it a success.

Imagine apples scattered on the ground yet growing there, attached to an underground apple tree with its branches, trunk and roots buried. That's how mushrooms grow, just the tip of a huge iceberg. The fleshy growths we speak of as mushrooms or toadstools are just the fruits of a fungus. The vegetative part is growing unseen.

The underground network of a fungus is called its mycelium, a mass of the tiny filaments called hypha (or hyphae, plural) the basic cellular structure of mushrooms.

In our lesson here about understanding mushrooms, it is important to understand how they live. Fungi grow by obtaining nutrition in three ways, three distinct lifestyles:

- Saprophytes feed on dead material such as fallen leaves or an old tree stump. The mycelium permeates the media and digests the cellulose. If there weren't fungi to eat the detritus, the world would be buried in debris.
- Parasites take nutrients from a living host. Even you and I can be hosts to fungi. A common medical complaint is the fungus that grows on toenails. Don't worry. Parasites, if they are smart, won't bite the hand that feeds them. The hen of the woods is a parasitic mushroom. If you discover a tree with a hen growing on it, you can likely return year after year, in its season, and collect the huge, delicious edible.
- A third lifestyle of fungi is termed symbiotic, wherein a mutually beneficial relationship is formed between a fungus and a green plant. When the mycelium of a fungus joins with the roots of a plant, they form mycorrhiza. It was this mycorrhizal relationship which enabled the first plants to escape the water and to colonize land millions of years ago.

The green plants that form this mycorrhizal relationship with fungi (and it is estimated that 80 to 90 percent of all plants do), share the sugar they make by photosynthesis with the fungi attached to its roots. In return, the fungus supplies the plant with essential nutrients such as phosphorus, potassium and calcium. The mycorrhiza also enhances the plant's ability to absorb moisture and avoid disease.

Mycorrhizae are relevant in many ways and to many people such as ecologists, foresters, mushroom hunters, gardeners, and farmers. Mycorrhizae greatly influence the growth of onions, corn, strawberries and many tree crops. It's hard to underestimate its importance to healthy soil. It's also the reason why transplanting certain wildflowers just won't work. They may be part of an intricate web of life.

Mushrooms are fairly specific about with which trees they associate. A seasoned morel hunter knows this fact and will seek out cottonwood, ash, elm, cherry, and apple trees. (Morels aren't entirely mycorrhizal, but that's another story.) Chanterelles grow with oaks. Pine trees support dozens of different species of mushrooms.

You can see how the lifestyles of the fungi would effect their cultivation. Most store-bought mushrooms are saprophytic. The oyster mushroom, for example, has proven fairly easy to grow on sawdust or even recycled newspaper. More difficult to grow are the mushrooms that need to be coupled with plants.

The famed black truffle is a symbiotic type of fungus, growing on both oaks and hazelnut trees. To grow truffles, mycelium is introduced to the roots of saplings and, after some luck and years of growth, the fruiting bodies form underground. (No, you don't need a pig to find them but that's yet another story.) In fact there are hundreds of species of truffles growing all around the world, even here in Missouri, but they are mostly flavorless except perhaps to the rodents who dig them up to eat.

Understanding how mushrooms grow will help you find and enjoy them more.



MOMS 2007 Calendar

- Sat. 6/2** 10:00 AM Foray. Babler State Park. Steve Booker 618-346-1740; AROHD2@aol.com
- 6/8 - 6/10** Foray Weekend. Ha Ha Tonka State Park. Shannon Stevens, 314-481-4131; sporeprince@sbcglobal.net
- Sat. 6/16** 10:00 AM Class. Common Mushrooms of Missouri, Part 1.
- Sat. 6/23** 8:00 AM Foray. Forest 44. Pat Lennon, 314-918-1524; myco99@yahoo.com
- Sat. 6/30** 12:00 PM Foray. Tyson Research Center. Charlie Raiser, 314-821-6768; charlieraiser@aol.com
- Sun. 7/8** 10:00 AM Foray. West Tyson Park. Maxine Stone, 314-963-0280; verymaxine@aol.com
- 7/13 - 7/14** Foray Weekend. Sweet 'n Chanterelles. Babler State Park. Dave Yates, 314-368-0586; dbytalk23@gmail.com
- Sun. 7/22** 10:00 AM Foray. Castlewood State Park. John Davis, 302-6939; shroomman@sbcglobal.net
- Sun. 8/19** 10:00 AM Foray. Charleville Winery. Chuck Yates, 314-843-5580; c2yates@yahoo.com
- Sat. 8/25** 10:00 AM Class. Common Mushrooms of Missouri, Part 2.
- 9/20 - 9/23** Foray Weekend. Mingo. Save the date.
- Sat. 10/13** 10:00 AM Class. Common Edible Mushrooms of Missouri.
- 10/26-10/28** Foray Weekend. Hawn State Park. Shannon Stevens, 314-481-4131; sporeprince@sbcglobal.net

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.

2007 Mushroom ID Classes

2007 classes will be held at Babler State Park Visitors Center and will begin at 10:00 am. We will break for lunch (byo) and then foray for fungi.

The dates are as follows:

- Saturday, June 16 **Common Mushrooms of Missouri I**
Saturday, August 25 **Common Mushrooms of Missouri II**
Saturday, October 13 **Common Edible Mushrooms of Missouri**

Instructors will be Brad Bomanz, Don Dill 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. These classes are free to MOMS members

Brad Bomanz, 636-225-0555, bbomanz@yahoo.com
Don Dill, 314-647-3307
Maxine Stone, 314-963-0280
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