Heavy Rains Promise Bounty at Mingo

"If the rains keep up like they have this summer we'll be seeing an abundance of fungi at Mingo," predicts Dr. Walt Sundberg, designated mycologist for this year's Fall Campout. Dr. Sundberg is a nationally respected (and loved) mycologist from Southern Illinois University and co-author of the *Macmillan Field Guide to Mushrooms.* Also guiding us to the mycological light will be Jay Justice, past president of the Arkansas Mycological Society and editor of *The Mycophile,* NAMA's newsletter.

Mingo is the last refuge of the swamps which once covered Missouri's Bootheel. This is a unique opportunity to see Missouri at its wildest in peak mushroom season. Our guides, veteran NAMA members Marty and Jack Toll, are well acquainted with Mingo. Jack was wildlife manager of the area for many years.

Our meeting place, site of meals and programs, is the University of Missouri Forestry Conference Center. It is located near Lake Wappapello, just north of Poplar Bluff.

Most participants will arrive Friday evening, September 11. Saturday, we will forage around Lake Wappapello and nearby Mingo National Wildlife Refuge. Saturday evening, Dr. Sundberg will offer a program on "Interesting and Unusual Fungi". The weekend formally concludes on Sunday with a mushroom tasting around noon.

Registration is $35 per person and payable in advance. This includes 4 meals: breakfast Saturday, a sack lunch and a dinner Saturday and Sunday breakfast. You are on your own for dinner Friday night and lunch Sunday.

Register now.

To insure a place for yourself (space is limited to 60 participants and many are already taken), send in your registration as soon as possible. Registration form is on page 5. Guests are welcome.

Be prepared.

Mingo is an area teeming with flora and fauna. Wear appropriate clothing of light weight long pants, long sleeve shirt, a hat, high boots and bring several changes of clothes. Before a foray, spray your clothes with insect repellant. Within four hours after a hunt, shower. Sponge on vinegar in the shower to knock out chiggers. Also, soap (*Safeguard* is rumored to work) should wash away poison ivy oils. Check for ticks as you undress. Before you kill them, put out their legs and spit curses at them and their kin.

**Books for sale.**

At Mingo, Dr. Sundberg will have copies on hand to sell, at a discount, *Mushrooms of North America* by Roger Phillips, *Mushrooms of the Lake Between the Lakes* and the *Macmillan Field Guide to Mushrooms,* both by Dr. Walt Sundberg, and Nancy Smith Weber's *A Morel Hunter's Companion.***

**Accommodations:**

- **Dorms:** The University of Missouri Forest Conference Center has new dormitory-style air-conditioned buildings. Most of the dorms sleep six persons total in three two-person rooms with bunk beds. (Get it?) Each dorm has one unisex bathroom. Cost per person is $10 per night, payable in advance (see registration form). The Center sleeps a maximum of 34. Space in the dorm will be on a first come, first served basis. Bring your own bedding.

- **Recommended motel:** We are encouraging everyone wanting comparatively more luxurious accommodation to stay at Miller's Motor Lodge. Miller's comes recommended by AAA and Marty and Jack Toll. The motel has a swimming pool and each room has a refrigerator and color TV. The Millers are offering a special rate of $32 per night, double occupancy. Also available are lovely log cabins with a "great room" and two bedrooms—$92 for 4 persons, $75 for 2. Reservations should be made directly with Miller's Motor Lodge at 314/222-8579.

- **Other motels.** Other motels with prices quoted per couple, starting: Twin Oaks Motel (222-8733—$33.), Wedgewood Lodge (222-8203—$18.), Driftwood Resort (222-8802—$25.), End of the Dam (222-8188—$20.), Barrett's (222-8571—$37.) and Pow-Wow Resort (222-8596—$25.). All of these are in or near metropolitan Wappapello. There are of course, a number of motels in Poplar Bluff. In nearby scenic Puxico is the Idlewild Motel (222-3305—$20.). Reservations are suggested.

**Recommended Camping.** Those who wish to camp have several options. The Tolls have scouted out the Redman Creek Campground on the lake side of Highway T, sites 24-28. (There's another Redman Creek on the other side of the highway.) Both are run by the Corps of Engineers (222-8233 or 222-8800) and are in close proximity to the Conference Center. There are hook-ups.

**Other Camping.** There is free primitive camping at Duck Creek State Wildlife Area, 7 miles north of Mingo on Highway 51 (222-3337) and hookups at Pow-Wow (222-8596), Wappapello State Park (207-3232), Stoney Dell (222-8332), Davis Campground (222-8592), and Chaonia Landing (297-3206). Davis Campground is apparently the closest.
Attack of the Green-spored Lepiota

"I felt like I was gonna die," Bob Terry of Cedar Hill, Missouri said from his bed at St. Anthony's Hospital. "I was on my way to work. At first I thought I was just nauseous but then I started throwing up so much I had to get to the hospital. I knew I was in big trouble."

Terry had eaten only two bites of a raw cap of *Chlorophyllum molybdites*. Commonly known as the Green-spored Lepiota, it is America's number one cause of mushroom poisoning—its robust size a temptation to its victims. From an all too hasty identification of his recently purchased mushroom identification guide, Terry believed the mushroom he found on a lawn in St. Louis was a *Lepiota procera*.

Terry's symptoms of vomiting and diarrhea began about an hour after ingestion. The agony was to last over six hours.

After Terry's arrival to the emergency room, doctors phoned Cardinal Glennon Poison Control who, in turn, phoned me to identify the mushroom. When hospital staff described it to have a "white cap with greenish gills," I told them to let Terry know that he'd be all right. I then checked with James Trestail of the Blodgett Poison Center in Wisconsin for the latest treatment (maintain fluids and electrolytes), relayed the message to the hospital and then drove to the hospital for positive identification of the fruited body and to offer mycological sympathy to the patient.

"You've learned a valuable lesson," I assured Terry. "It's great to believe it possible to identify mushrooms. You're just lucky you weren't experimenting with the deadly Amanitas out in the woods right now."

Terry is a morel hunter and also eats "reds" (*Gyromitra caroliniana*). Now Terry knows how to make a spore print. I encouraged Bob to join the MMS to "get back on the horse that threw him" and share his experience with members.

Recovering from the shock of possibly becoming a very young widow, Mrs. Terry was skeptical. "From now on the only mushrooms he's gonna eat will be from the grocery store," she said.

Consider also the expenses. Terry was kept at the hospital overnight. The bills aren't all in, but just the ambulance ride cost $325.

About two weeks later at 2 a.m., I got another call on another poisoning. Someone's wife had assured him that the *Chlorophyllum* in their yard was edible. The husband had eaten two cooked caps and suffered vomiting and diarrhea. The other guests and the wife didn't eat enough to get sick. The moral is:

**In your stomach—on your shoulders.**

Mistake a bluebird for an indigo bunting and you embarrass yourself before an ornithologist. Mistake an *Amanita virosa* for an *Agaricus campestris* and mistake no more.

You must take the responsibility to identify a mushroom and determine edibility for yourself. Be absolutely sure.

How do you become 100% sure? Look it up in several books. The more the better. Read descriptions thoroughly. Compare habitats, seasons, distribution and comments by the authors. Check out possible look-alikes. Study botanical illustrations as well as photographs.

Almost every different mushroom guide will have fresh insights and perhaps a more direct path to a particular mushroom's identity. Just as a morel hunter spots the hidden ones by moving through the trees, you may gain from the different viewpoints and book layouts.

You need not be able to identify all mushrooms to correctly identify a particular variety just as you need not know all flowers to recognize a rose.

Don't take someone else's word for it. Others may help guide you to what they think the mushroom is but always question and confirm for yourself. Make your own determination. This is especially important for novices. Remember that a beginner can not judge the "expert's" expertise or determine how careful the expert might be. Are they telling you the whole story? Maybe it's edible only after thorough cooking or dangerous when consumed with alcohol.

Perhaps the "expert" learned to mushroom in California or Thailand. Is he familiar with this area? Can he show you in a book so you can see too?

Don't try to fit your find's description to the one in the guide. Sounds funny, but it is a common mistake. A mushroom is what it is no matter what you'd like it to be. No matter how much you want the *Chlorophyllum molybdites* to be a *Lepiota procera*, it will be what it is.

Remember Groucho's TV show, *You Bet Your Life?* Learn the deadly mushrooms. Know what the stakes are. When you eat something for the first time, eat just a little and don't mix with other unknown fungi. Save a specimen for identification later identification. If all goes well, eat more the next time.

In time you'll have the experience to experiment. You may, for instance, be willing to eat *Chlorophyllum molybdites*, after boiling to remove toxins, as some daring mushroomers do. Phil Roos has gotten sick several times testing his personal tolerance to the blewit, *Lepista nuda*, a mushroom commonly eaten around the world.

In a recent court case, the details as yet undisclosed to the *Earthstar*, a plaintiff sued a publisher for damages suffered from an incident of mushroom poisoning resulting from a misprint in a guide. The suit was dismissed on the grounds that mushroom hunting was deemed an "inherently dangerous activity."

I'm not trying to scare anyone. Just always be careful. It's like when I used to ride a motorcycle. Even when I approached a green signal, I slowed down enough to stop if someone would run their red light. Sure, I would have the right of way, but I would be one suffering.

—Ken Gilberg

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**For Sale from MMS**

**BIG RED • POISONOUS OR EDIBLE?**

MMS T-shirts $10 plus $2 postage.

Booksplates depicting *Amanita brunnescens* in a beautiful drawing by Don Dill $1.50/dozen plus $.60 postage.

*Texas Mushrooms* by Susan and Van Metzler. Save over 15% of cover price! $15.00 each (plus $2 shipping)

Order from Ken or buy at the next foray.
Foray Reports

Date: July 11, 1992
Place: Rockbridge State Park
Leader: Phil Roos
Number of participants: 5
Weather conditions: Heavy rains day before and two days before that but very dry season. Temp. in the 80’s
Species identified: Auricularia auricularia mostly
Comments: See Culinary Corner this issue.

Date: July 19, 1992
Place: Rockwoods Reservation, St. Louis County
Leader: Don Dill
Number of participants: 12
Weather conditions: Much rain over previous two weeks. Temp. in the 80’s.
Comments: Quite a haul!

Date: August 1, 1992
Place: Babler State Park (Sweat’n Chanterelles Foray)
Leader: Ken Gilberg
Number of participants: 13
Weather conditions: Much rain over summer. Very light rain previous week. Temp. 80°

Book Reviews

Texas Mushrooms by Susan Metzler and Van Metzler
University of Texas Press, 1992

This brand new guide is terrific for beginners and advanced alike. Use of it over time will prove it’s worth, but already many of its outstanding features are shining through.

The authors state up front that the book would never have been done without the Texas Mycological Society. It is a fine example of the fruits of a group’s activity and the dedication of two amateur mushroomers. (Don’t worry about the accuracy—Orson K. Miller is credited as scientific advisor.)

Photos are large and explicit. Comments are generous. The text for individual species includes its meaning and the origin of its name, a friendly presentation not found in most guides. The closest thing to it would be the glossary of Latin and Greek terms in the back of Mushrooms Demystified.

The book includes just a few recipes but they are good basic and multi-use ideas, such as “Any Kind of (Edible) Mushroom Soup” and a “Basic Mushroom Tasting Recipe." The “Easiest Wild Mushroom Pizza” is essentially having a pizza delivered, adding your sliced mushrooms and reheating. Great idea!

Some Missouri mushrooms, many not seen in usual east and west coast books, may be found more readily in this book. Other mushrooms, perhaps found almost exclusively in Texas may entice some folks to attend the Texas Mycological Society’s annual foray. This year it is October 9-11.

Missouri Mycological Society has bought a quantity of Texas Mushrooms to pass on a discount of over 15% to our members. List price is $17.95; sale price is $15.00. To reserve a copy, drop a card to Ken and pick up at the next foray. If you want it shipped, add $2.00.

Eastern Forests by Ann Sutton
and Myron Sutton
Alfred A. Knopf, 1992

I recently purchased this book in an attempt to broaden my knowledge of the natural world. Well, actually, I wanted to learn to identify ash and elm trees to increase productivity in my morel hunting.

The book is well conceived and contains easily understood text accompanied by some excellent photographs. It has obvious value in our locale and all things considered I would recommend the book without reservations. My reason for writing this, however, is to show a discernible shortage of fact (if not understanding) of the full and critical role fungi play in the interdependence of natural systems.

I’m certain that we all have, for the most part, been sensitized to this interdependence of all things, each upon the other, in the last 20 or so years, but one can still detect a subtle indifference to the world of fungi, even in books such as this. There are very attractive mushroom pictures in the book but weighed against a text that I can only describe as skimpy. (In a total of twenty pages of text I could find three single words, one and a half isolated sentences and a single paragraph containing six sentences of some 79 words! Pretty meager I’d say)
"Well you didn't buy it for the mushrooms," you might point out. You'd be right. I didn't. But lots of other people will buy it and many will assume that the fungal world is small stuff compared to insects, birds and flowers. We, however, know it's a whole other world largely unseen and which permeates all of the rest of the visible world.

They could have at least pointed out that without fungus there would be no soft bread, no zoo and we'd be up to our eyeballs in dead wood.

—Don Dill

Recent Articles

Here's a list of recent mushroom related articles sent in by readers and friends. The editor thanks clippers and encourages you to send in either copies or originals. Don't expect someone else has already sent the article—I'd rather have a few than none at all.

Black and white copies are available for $1 each plus a self-addressed legal size envelope.

"Wild Mushrooms are Endangered by their Popularity", New York Times 7/25/92. The Northwest is being prospected by mushroom hunters and they are damaging the forests.


"Out of the Woods", Metropolitan Home 2/92. Colman Andrews gives recipes such as Cod with ceps, and Rigatoni with morels and asparagus.

Mushroom Conversion

From the time I married into her family I urged my sister-in-law, Peggy, to taste a mushroom. "Yuck! I don't even like the looks of them!"

After six years, she finally succumbed to my persuasion. She ate one, two, three mushrooms; then began to cry. "What's—what's the problem?" I queried anxiously.

Between her tears she answered, "Those mushrooms are delicious."

"Then why are you crying?" I gawked in puzzlement.

Peggy waited, "I'm crying because I missed out on all those good mushrooms my whole life!"

—Samuel Gilberg

### SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

* Previously unlisted event

**August 13-16** - NAMA Foray in Angel Fire, New Mexico
**August 20-23** - Wild Mushrooms, Telluride, Colorado
**September 12 & 13** - Fall Campout at Mingo National Wildlife Refuge, Puxico, MO
**September 27** - (Sunday) 10:00 A.M. Rockwoods Reservation; Leader: Don Dill
**October 3** - (Saturday) 10:00 A.M. Gillespie Lake (III.); Leader: Leland Von Behren
**October 9-11** - Texas Mycological Society Foray at Chain o' Lakes resort. Contact: Susan Metzler 713-645-5755
**October or November** (date to be set) Erika Petke leads a session to learn to use microscopes and reagents to aid in the identification of mushrooms (St. Louis).
**December 5-7** - Gulf States Mycological Society Foray at University of Mississippi. Contact: Anna Pleasanton, 1000 Adams St., New Orleans, LA 70118. Phone: 504-861-4248

### Culinary Corner

**What has ears but hears not?**

Besides corn, the elder.

According to legend, Judas, his shame unbearable after betraying Jesus, hung himself from an elder tree. *Auricularia auricula* sprang forth. That's how one of it's common names, Judas' ear, came to be.

On Phil's foray to Rockbridge State Park on July 11 this year, we gathered four to five pounds of *Auricularia* in a short time from standing and fallen dead trees. These *Auricularia* were larger than any of us had ever found. Field guides say they average 2-4" across—a few of these measured 8" across.

This mushroom is often encountered by impatient mushrooms who go out the day after a rain. It is plentiful, common and dries easily. It is reportedly affects blood coagulation and may contribute to the low incidence of coronary heart disease in China.

We lamented the culinary qualities of this fungus. Crunchy, rubbery, nearly tasteless. But what would Moo Shu Pork be without it? It is exclusively associated with Chinese gastronomy. Indeed, Tree-Ear, the common name used in the *Audubon Guide for Auricularia auricula* is a direct translation of *Mu Er*, 蘑菇. The Chinese's Mu-Er is actually *Auricularia polytricha*, a related species. The mushroom is also known as cloud-ear, perhaps to the Cantonese.

We challenged ourselves to expand our notions. Erika said the mushrooms are marketed in Germany as Chinese morels and sell for the equivalent of $3.00 for a few ounces. Perhaps it could be a squid or octopus substitute. When was the last time you turned to the fridge only to find yourselves out of octopus again?

Jane Grigson's *The Mushroom Feast* offers such treats as Pig's liver with wood ear, Yuan Mei's sea cucumber (not something the kids would get excited about), Pickled Cabbage steamed with pork, and Braised satin chicken.

We came up with a few ideas to use what we'd found. One was not to fight the oriental connotations. Make them into easy egg foo young, combining eggs, bean sprouts, wood-ears soy, garlic and/or onion, etc. Try them in vegetable and rice dishes.

Maybe they could enhance Jewish cooking. Add it to chicken soup. Not only will it cure your cold, you could prevent, God forbid, a heart attack.
Several of the Auricularia found on the Rockbridge foray measured 8" across.

From a German cookbook, though oriental in flavor, Erika made a dish which could be called tree-ears with curried pineapple.

If you come up with new dishes to create with Tree-ear, write the Earthstar. We hear you.

Tree-ears with curried pineapple
½ lb. Tree ears
¼ lb. pineapple chunks
2 Tablespoons soy
2 Tablespoons sherry
2 Tablespoons heavy cream

1 cup pineapple juice
1 teaspoon cornstarch
1 teaspoon curry
garlic powder
salt and pepper to taste

Heat the juice. Combine starch with soy and sherry. Add to cooking juice. Add pineapple, salt, pepper, a pinch of garlic powder, and cream. In another pan, saute mushrooms in the butter for a short time with salt, pepper and another pinch of garlic. Line the bottom of a bowl with the tree ear and then pour the cooked pineapple mixture on top. Serve hot with rice.

Myco Plates

Dr. Sundberg is seeking input for his research into mycologically related personalized licence plates. If you spot any AGARICS, FUNGUY, MORELS, or the like, drop him a card. 111 S. Glenview Dr., Carbondale, IL 62901.

If you spot Missouri plate, CHNTR-L, that's the editor's car.

Fall Campout Registration Form

Name ________________________________

Address ________________________________

City, State, Zip ___________________________

Phone (day/evening) _______________________

Roommate request for dorm __________________

MAKE CHECKS PAYABLE TO:
MISSOURI MYCOLOGICAL SOCIETY

SEND TO: Phil Roos, 2544 Lexington Dr., Jefferson City MO 65109

DEADLINE: Aug. 20th—Please register soon

CANCELLATIONS AND REFUNDS:
If registration is canceled before August 30, $25 returned. After August 30, $10 returned. After September 6, no refund.

Registration ................................................... $35.00
Dormitory @ $10/night (bring your own bedding) ................ 20.00
Enclosed ........................................................ $________

Make motel reservations directly with motel. Redman Creek offers 50% off for those over 62. They don't take reservations.
The Dancing Mushroom
(from Japanese Tales edited and translated by Royall Tyler, Pantheon Fairy tale and Folklore Library)

Four or five woodcutters from the Capital once went to the mountains north of the city and, as fortune would have it, got lost. They were puzzling over which way to go when they heard people coming down the hillside. Who could they be? Four or five nuns, singing and dancing their way along, as jolly as you please. The woodcutters took fright. Real nuns would never behave this way! They couldn't be human! No, they must be tengu, or demons of some sort!

The nuns made straight for the woodcutters who, despite their alarm, managed to ask the estimable ladies why they were carrying on that way, and why on top of everything else were they coming down from high on the mountain.

"Oh dear, all of our dancing and singing must have rather frightened you!" the nuns replied. "You see, we're nuns from such-and-such a convent. We all went to the mountains to pick flowers for the altar and then got completely lost. When we noticed some mushrooms, we realized we were hungry. Of course we realized the mushrooms might be poisonous, but we decided we might as well go ahead and eat them as starve. They tasted good. Then we began dancing. We didn't mean to dance, you see, we just found ourselves doing it. We were quite surprised!"

The woodcutters now noticed how hungry they were. The nuns had kept their leftover mushrooms. "Why, rather than starve," thought the men, "we might as well beg some off the nuns and eat too!" So they did.

As soon as they had eaten the mushrooms they found themselves dancing. Nuns and woodcutters danced and laughed together, and when the drunkenness passed they went their separate ways, though by what paths no one knows. Ever since, that mushroom has been called maitake, the dancing mushroom.

All in all, the incident is a bit odd. We have this maitake too, in our own time, but the people who eat it don't always dance. On balance the story is dubious, even as they who tell it readily confess.