Willie May – Our Morel Master & Snake Handler

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April 22, 2001

Friday morning I woke early, around 2:30 a.m. I did a quick chat and then an hours’ worth of paper work. I packed my daily cooler which now consists of three ice wraps for my knees, two 32 oz. frozen water bottles, two smaller water bottles, breakfast, lunch and a snack. I had written a note to myself not to forget taking the reason for my trip. This was to be another combo morel/timber rattlesnake hunt, to collect morels and to release the timber rattler I had captured back to her den.

My goal was to do the release as the sun rose over the eastern hills. The temperature was 55 degrees. I knew she would be sluggish at that temperature, so I just reached in her sterilized cage and picked her up by the back of her coil. She started to straighten out and I slipped her head into the mesh bag and tied it tight. I set her on the floor of the car to warm her as we headed south.

About halfway there, I began to get nervous about this release. Would it be too dark? Would I need a flashlight? What if I tripped and landed on her and she bit me (not from hatred but from self defense, of course). I did not want to wake Mary Kaye, as the kids were off school today and she could sleep in. I called her car phone and left a detailed message as to where I would be parked and the direction of the den site from the car. This made me feel better and I worried no more.

There was no traffic or stop lights at this time of morning so I reached the bottoms near the den site at 6:05 a.m. I headed the car to the bluffs and passed a fellow ‘shroomer at 6:12 a.m. (Anytime you see a morel hunter in the woods this early, you know this is a serious morel hunter. Make a note of where his car is parked. And I did!) Mary Kaye called me as I

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Sweat 'N Chanterelles 2001: July 20th – 22nd
— David Yates (with info and help of Jim Winn)

Ah! Once again, mushrooming for the impatient or frustrated morel hunter . . . chanterelles are so much easier to spot than those pesky brown morels. Many think tastier too! Come join us for our 3rd annual Sweat 'N Chanterelles co-sponsored by Meramec State Park in Sullivan, Missouri. This weekend is open to everyone, members and nonmembers alike, and is free (except meals). We thank Meramec State Park for their continued help, generously co-sponsoring this event and providing the camping area, shelter, amphitheater and park staff. All questions should be directed to David Yates – 314-457-0939, dyates@trivers.com or Meramec State Park – 573-468-6072. See you there! Here’s more than you need to know:

Friday, July 20th: Pick a campsite in Group Campground C. Share a potluck dinner with me and whoever else’s there. We’ll eat well, try to stay cool and swap lies. This is a non-powered campsite – bring your own light. Firewood is BYO, so throw a few logs in your car. If you need electric, power sites are $12 per day; talk to a power ranger. (The park requires that pets be leashed and that campers arrive before 10 p.m.)

Saturday, July 21st:
9 a.m.: Meet at Shelter #1. Look for the MOMS mushroom sign for brief orientation. Long pants and a hat are recommended – ticks and brambles are out in full force!
9:30 a.m. – Noon: Go get ‘em! The hunter with the heaviest basket (minus rocks) will win praise and be the envy of all until next year. We will have a beginner’s group for, yep, you guessed it, beginners – you know who you are!!
Noon – 1:30 p.m.: Shelter #1 for lunch (BYO) and mushroom identification with the one and only Jay Justice.
1:30 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.: More hunting or relax, hike or swim in the healing waters of the Meramec. Meet briefly at the shelter to show off and gawk. Then break to camp.
5:30 p.m.: Dinner at Meramec Park Lodge (top of the hill) will be buffet style (approx. $8.00 + beverage) or from the menu. First to arrive will be seated in a semiprivate area. Late arrivals will be by the kitchen or in the steerge.
7 p.m. – 9 p.m.: Gather at the Fischer Cave Amphitheater, near the campground entrance, (the Visitors Center if rainy). We’ll have a tally of our finds and tell of the chanterelles too big that were left in the woods. Our speaker will provide an interesting and informative talk; we are keeping his/her identity secret because we don’t know it yet.
9 p.m. – ???: Campfire and carousing.

Sunday, July 22nd. 9 a.m. – Noon: Hunt some more, swim and hike, whatever. Break camp at noon, although you’re welcome to stay in the park until they throw you out.

Directions/Accommodations: Take 1-44 west. Meramec State Park is three miles south of Sullivan, Missouri on Highway 185, approximately one hour west of St. Louis. Cabins for 2 to 8 people are available. Call the park for reservations – 573-468-6519. Sullivan has several inexpensive motels. Twenty-five minutes away in Bourbon is the Greer Hollow Farm B&B – 573-732-4979. For meals other than Saturday night, bring your own or check out some of the places in town.

I E: July 15 Spanish Picnic at the Kwapys
July 15th is the new date for the last Incurable Epicureans dinner of the year. Envision sitting on the bank grilling a whole lamb, drinking Riojo or Sangrias, friends sauteing chanterelles, sipping gazpacho with scads more authentic Spanish foods to sample. The menu and map to the Kwapys country home (near Pacific) will go out later. The cost is $17 for members and $25 for guests. Call Julie Ridlon with any questions, 636-227-7596

Dry July At Vadner Farm!! July 28 – 29
Saturday and Sunday . . . Hunt mushrooms on Saturday beginning 9 a.m. . . . Space facilities limited – call Andrea Vadner to sign up, get directions: 314-644-4321 . . . Go home after the foray or hang out and stay Saturday night (bring a tent etc. or ask Andrea if a bed is available) and hunt again on Sunday . . . BYO Saturday lunch/potluck Saturday dinner. Sunday vegetarian breakfast provided . . . 200+ acres in southwest Jefferson County (60 miles from St. Louis) . . . Hot! . . . Dry!

July 14th Foray
— Maxine Stone

Experience the awesome and eerie beauty of a foray at Graham Cave State Park, one of the oldest archeological sites in Missouri. It is a rock shelter where ancient humans lived, hunted and foraged thousands of years ago! There are caves, artifacts and history galore. The naturalists are so excited about this event that they would like to go with us if they have time. Not only will we educate them on the mythology of the area, we will also benefit by getting the whole story of what the area was like 10,000 years ago and what went on there. Graham Cave State Park is on Highway 70, 40 minutes west of the intersection of Hwy 70 and 40 at Wentzville. (There is a sign for the park on Hwy 70 near the Hwy 19 intersection). Meet at the park Visitors Center at 10 a.m. To carpool, meet at Mason Ridge School at 8:30 a.m., on the south side of Highway 40 at Mason Road one mile west of 270. Bring the usual: lunch, drinks, cameras, tick spray, books, etc. Just to take the walk on the path leading up to the cave is worth the trip. The foray leader is Gordon White, 314-434-6720.

Mingo Foray: Sept. 13-16
— Maxine Stone

Our annual state foray at Mingo promises to be the best yet: interesting and abundant fungi, wonderful speakers, excellent food and perfect weather! Once again, our meals will be served, mushrooms displayed, workshops held and most of us will lodge at Camp Latonka, a Girl Scout Camp on Lake Wappapello. Hotels are also available.

Our mycologists will include Dr. Walt Sundberg of Southern Illinois University, Dr. Andy Methven, of Eastern Illinois University, and Jay Justice, President of the Arkansas Mycological Society.

Attendance is limited. So send in your registration form (p. 3) now: $80 for members, $90 for nonmembers, $30 for children 6 - 17, $50 for students. The registration fee includes four meals. Julie Ridlon (of Chanterelle Catering and a MOMS member) is planning a French theme for these delicious meals.

Hold the weekend! Mark your calendars! Send in your registration! You won’t want to miss this excellent weekend.

If you have any questions, please contact Barbara O’Brien, 314-966-5308, LaughingEagle@earthlink, or Maxine Stone, 314-963-0128, VeryMaxine@aol.com.
Mingo Registration Form

Thursday, September 13, 2001 – Sunday, September 16, 2001

Name(s)__________________________

Address________________________________________

Phone______________________________ E-Mail_________

$_______ Registration Fee - $80 members, $90 nonmembers,
$30 children 6-17, $50 students

$_______ bed in screen cabin @ $6 per night ___ Thurs., ___ Fri., ___ Sat.

$_______ tent or RV space @ $3 per night ___ Thurs., ___ Fri., ___ Sat.

This registration includes four meals prepared by our own chef/caterer Julie Ridlon for
breakfast Saturday, box lunch Saturday, dinner Saturday and breakfast Sunday.

___ If you choose to not participate in these four delectable meals you may deduct
$20 from the registration fee. It is all meals or no meals.

I understand that if I choose to not have four catered meals, I will bring my own food
in coolers and my own accessories to prepare and eat and NOT enter the kitchen for
any reason - no storage, no borrowing, no anything!

$_______ Total Amount enclosed. This is for one, two people listed above.

Clip or copy this form and send it with your check payable to MOMS to Brad
Bomanz, 909 Woodside Village, Ballwin, MO 63021. Deadline is September 1.

Would like to be in a cabin with ________________

I would like to volunteer in some way during the weekend _________

If you have questions, please contact:

Barbara O'Brien, 314-966-5308, LaughingEagle@earthlink.net or
Maxine Stone, 314-963-0280, VeryMaxine@aol.com

(Willie May, continued from p. 1)

reached the den site to let me know she got my message and appreciated my being cautious.
She told me to be careful and I said I would call her when the mission was complete. My cell
phone worked on top of the bluffs so I brought it along as an extra measure of safety. The sun
would be up soon, but I would not hurry. I found myself checking the ash and elm as I walked
and had to tell myself to wait until I was headed the other way after the release. I negotiated
around the briar patch that protects this bluff area and went down the steep side of the south
slope that this bunch of rocks is located on. It was too steep to be carrying a rattlesnake,
and I was afraid of falling and landing on her. I couldn’t figure out why I hadn’t found the rock yet
and, after 150 yards, I was sweating profusely. I realized I had gotten on the slope too far to
the east and needed to go west. I climbed back to the top of the hill and backed to my
starting point, climbed down to the rock area and went the other way. Immediately I came
to the rock with the small crevice where she had been laying and warming herself in the afternoon
sun when I had found her. I was thinking of a way to warm her a little before the release, but
I didn’t think she would really appreciate my efforts. She had not made a sound all morning.
I untied the bag and gently coaxed her out near the entrance of the hole she had headed to just
before my grabbing her. She immediately started tongue-flicking and instantly knew she was
fine – her head was inside the hole within five seconds. I reached out and grabbed her to feel
her body slip through my hands one more time. She replied with her first rattle of the morning
and kept it up until she was down in her hole. As I listened and stood up, I looked to the east
and saw the sun sitting on top of the ridge.

OH BABY!

— Gene Leonard

How many forays have their own pet deer? The campers attending the Hellmuth Farm Foray over the Memorial Day weekend had not only perfect weather and the usual
culinary feast, but a fully-equipped juvenile wannabe buck named Baby. Bottle fed as an
injured fawn by the Hellmuth’s farm manager, Bob, Baby hung out with us all weekend,
eating mostly poison ivy and other delectables from the forest but accepting an occasional Frito from one of the children in the group. (He dutifully left the scene when
John Ward brought out his famous braised elk.) In addition to learning the ins and outs of
the shiitake business, we were treated to a tour of the Beefork Water Lily Farm, a 130-acre
spring-fed pond operation that ships water lilies by the truckload all over the country.
You shudda been there!

Another Successful Class

— Brad Bomanz

Happy faces with their morel collections!
The only Beginners Morel Class that guarantees everyone comes back a winner. Don Dill
always teaches an interesting beginners class and always knows the good spots to hunt. Do
his students look happy? You’re darn right they look happy. [Editor’s note: there might be
a picture on p. 8] Why, you might ask? That’s because all found morels on their first outing and
drove every minute of it. In a little less than one hour, they collected over a dozen
delicious fresh (a couple air dried) morels (Morchella esculenta), one black morel, fawn mush-
rooms and several unknown species. They all intend to put into practice the lessons learned
that day from Don and vow to be considerate collectors. A great group that were wonderful
students with a good sense of humor and a real affinity for finding those little rascals. Good
luck to you all. We wish you gentle rains, full baskets and strong legs. A special thanks to
Don Dill for his neverending generosity and great sense of humor, that without which,
these classes never would have become a reality and the fun of "shroomin’" would never
have been passed on to these, and all his past, students. We need more like you Don, you’re
my idol!

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Microscopy Class: Walt Sundberg will teach a microscopy class on June 23, 9 a.m. - 3 p.m., at Babler State Park. MOMS has three microscopes at the bunker for members’ use. Call Don Dill to register or send him your $20 (payable to MOMS): 314-647-3307, 1101 Surrey Hills Drive, St. Louis, MO 63117. Bring your own lunch and drink.

911 Forays: If you are interested in leading a 911 foray, contact Maxine Stone, 314-963-0280, VeryMaxine@aol.com. She will get the info onto our web page or e-mail members. If we get two days of rain, it is Saturday morning, the sun is out and you would like to hunt, check your e-mail and our website (MissouriMycologicalSociety.org).

Treasures from the Kingdom of Fungi: Taylor Lockwood will be in St. Louis on October 3 to give us an opportunity to view his artistry. He is a famed photographer of mushrooms and with the addition of music and or appropriate dialogue has created a slide show that connects the viewer with the magnificent aesthetic of mycology. The essence of his work is the appreciation of the beauty and variety of mushrooms and other fungi. He considers himself a treasure hunter. His photography is thoughtful, inspiring and simply gorgeous. Wednesday, October 3, 7 p.m., Powder Valley Nature Center; Reception to Follow.

Beginners Classes: The remaining Beginners Classes will not be at Babler but will be at Rockwoods Reservation on the last Sunday of each month at 10 a.m.

Mushroom Speakers Wanted: Send your suggestions of mushroom speakers for next year’s winter luncheon to the Earthstar. (You have already mentioned Gary Lincoff and David Arora as worth considering; thanks also for suggesting Charles McIlvaine – getting him would be a real coup, given that he died in 1909.)

Minnesota: July 5-8, NAMA Foray, Collegeville, Minnesota; http://namy.org.

Colorado: Aug. 23-26, Annual Telluride Mushroom Conference, Telluride, Colorado. For info, contact Fungophile, lodomyco@uswest.net; 303-296-9359; www.cmsweb.org.

Morel Madness 2001

Well we did it again! Despite a late spring, 58 morel-mad hunters scrambled up and down the steep hills near Louisiana, Missouri and picked just over 1,000 morels over the weekend of April 21 - 22. A newcomer, Ben Ellis, found a two-day total of 219 morels, weighing 6 pounds. Unfortunately he did not know of the noon deadline on Sunday and weighed in at 12:20. This left Bob Beckwith in the lead with 179, Bill May with 131 and Shannon Stevens with 106. Shannon Stevens was proclaimed King after he found one tree that produced 125 nice yellow morels. He and Michael Perks (who walked right past this tree) were team champions with a one day total of 187 morels. Tallest morel at 8.5 inches went to Dale Defreece. Smallest morel was found by Eleanor Beal (just under an inch tall). Eleanor also teamed with Lee Toll and they found 107 morels and Eleanor was crowned queen for 2001. Maxine Stone found the largest false morel. Elm ash and tulip poplars were the trees to hunt this year as the cottonwood bottoms were flooded.

Thanks to everyone who helped with this successful event. A big thanks to Pam Jensen for her scrumptious breakfasts. A hearty thanks to Shannon Stevens who ramrodded the event by lending a helping hand in the kitchen, cleanup duty and just being there when we needed him. Thanks to Maxine for setting up the great speakers and to LaRee Defreece for running registrations. A special thanks from me to the 58 hunters for all your kind appreciations during the event. You made my weekend!

A special thank-you to Ari Jumpponen and Jeanne Mihail for their wonderful talks. We enjoyed spending time with their families, including our good friend Johanne Bruhn.

Next year we will go back to a one-day hunt on Saturday only but keep it a three-day event for those who have the time (and knees!). Keep your eyes on the road and in the treetops for next year’s biggest morel producers.

(Maxine Stone has a light beige Eddie Bauer jacket that she found. Contact her if it is yours. Joe Walsh is missing his shave kit and it had his hearing aids in it; anyone see it?)

Report From Meramec State Park

— Joe and Lois Walsh

We had a fine sunny day at Meramec State Park for our April 14 morel hunt. The afternoon temperature reached 77 degrees, from a low of 46 that morning. Hunters included Marcia & Walter Carpenter, Alyssa, Bill, Christine & Josh Dodson, Ben Ellis, Bill & Todd Fasick, Mark Kroutil, Rick LaMonica, Julie McWilliams, Doris Ogrowsky, Charlie Raiser, Mike Ruemmler, Elizabeth Shannon, Barb & Gary Steps, Maxine Stone, Jeff Till, Toni Vafi, Elaine Waccherle, Joe and Lois Walsh, David Yates and Barb & Paul Zacher. (Our apologies if we left out anyone.)

We met about 9:30. After a brief orientation, we headed into the woods along the river. One of the little boys immediately found a nice little grey morel! Several more of those were found under a few dead elm trees, but most of those found were small to medium beautiful, fresh, golden yellows hiding under sycamore trees. Everyone I talked to reported finding at least one. Nobody found any half-caps, blacks, delicious, or gyrometra. All those found were of the *Morchella esculenta* variety.

We re-convened for picnic lunch and continued the hunt during the afternoon. One of my intended areas was closed to the public until May 1, so we proceeded with plan “C”, which was to hike down to the river once more from the park lodge.

The surprise of the day was found by Mike R. and Dave Y., who spotted two tiny morels that were growing amid the barren ornamental chat surrounding an oak tree in the parking lot by the lodge! Those morels were only about an inch high, were very dark and appeared to be desiccated. They reminded me of the “sand morels” that I have found growing on the sandbars along the Illinois River.

The afternoon foray was somewhat less successful, but a number of fine specimens were found. We had a good time and hope to repeat the foray again next year if there is any interest.

Miscellaneous

Thanks to Pat Lennon for suggesting that the member list be on an easily separable from and back of a page (maybe next year we’ll go it on it’s own piece of paper). Thanks for proofreading to Mrs. BeanHead.
Species List, June 9 Foray

Lots of us (see picture) hunted at Rockwoods Reservation on a perfect early summer day and found a good variety of stuff (see picture).

- Agaricus augustus
- Boletus griseus
- Clavicorona pyxidata
- Ciliocybe gibba
- Coprinus atramentarius
- Cortinarius sp.
- Craterellus phallus (black trumpet)
- Hygrophorus sp.
- Inocybe sp.
- Laccaria laccata
- Lactarius camphoratus
- Lactarius volemus
- Leotia lubrica
- Marasmius oreades
- Mycena leaiana
- Peziza phyllogeta (brown cup fungus)
- Tremellodendron pallidum
- Xylaria hypoxylon

photos by Ken Gilberg
Event and Foray Schedule

Meet at visitor centers unless otherwise noted. Bring a basket, long pants, wax paper (bags are nice), bug repellent. Foray coordinator: Gordon White

June 23, Sat. 9 a.m. - 3 p.m., Microscopy Class, Walt Sundberg, Babler St. Park, see p. 2

June 24, Sun., 10 a.m. Beginners Class, Don Dill, Rockwoods Reservation

July 15, Incurable Epicureans, see p. 7

July 20 - 22, Sweat 'N Chanterelles, Meramec State Park, see p. 2

July 28 - 29, Sat. - Sun., Dry July Foray, Vahner Farm, see p. 2

July 29, Sun., 10 a.m., Beginners Class, Don Dill, Rockwoods Reservation

July 31, deadline for the August Earthstar

Aug. 24, Sun., 10 a.m., Beginners Class, Don Dill, Rockwoods Reservation

Sept. 13 - 16, Annual Fall Foray, Mingo Wildlife Refuge, see p. 2

Sept. 30, Sun., 10 a.m. Beginners Class, Don Dill, Rockwoods Reservation

Oct. 13, Sat., foray, 10 a.m., Leland Von Behren, Hazelit State Park


Don Dill Students: Beginning A Lifetime Of The Ruinous Pursuit Of Fungi