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!

continued on next page
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 Kamlertook 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 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 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 Deary 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 tile 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!!!

With mg fellow “dorktionaries”! Let’s do it again next year!!!

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.

**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, 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.

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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
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; charliteraiser@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. Sweat ’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; shrooman@sbcglobal.net

**Sun. 8/19** 10:00 AM  **Foray. Charleville Winery.** Chuck Yates, 314-843-5580; cyates@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.

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**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
VeryMaxine@aol.com

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**Missouri Mycological Society**

3654 French Ave, St. Louis, MO 63116