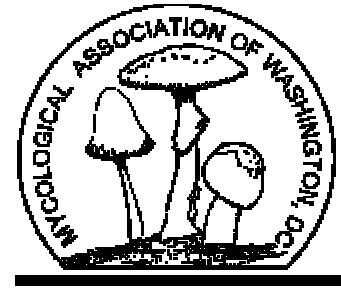


# Potomac Sporophore



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## **WV Foray**

-Jon Ellifritz

Our West Virginia foray weekend this year will be held at the Lost River Retreat Center in Lost River, WV, about 100 miles west of the Capital Beltway, from Friday evening, August 6 to the afternoon of Sunday, August 8. The cost of \$95 per adult includes two nights' lodging (based on minimum occupancy of 3 per room) and 5 meals (Saturday breakfast through Sunday lunch). Participants should bring their own sleeping bags or bed linen, and towels. Pillows and blankets are available on request. Costs for those under 18 will range from \$30 to \$80. We will have forays in nearby Lost River State Park and the George Washington National Forest, and our guest mycologists will be Bill Rody, author of the recently published field guide *Mushrooms of West Virginia and the Central Appalachians*, and Donna Mitchell. To reserve a space, please send your check or money order payable to MAW or the Mycological Association of Washington, Inc., along with the names, e-mail and/or postal addresses, and telephone numbers of participants, to MAW Foray Chair Jon Ellifritz, 1903 Powhatan Road, Hyattsville, MD 20782, by July 24. For answers to questions, including rates for minors, contact me at this address, by phone at 301-422-7517, or by e-mail at [ellijon@earthlink.net](mailto:ellijon@earthlink.net). And if you anticipate coming but will not be reserving immediately, please let me know as soon as possible that you will probably attend in order for us to have an early estimate of our space needs.

## **Laurel Highlands Foray**

-Sharon Cooperman

MAW's Laurel Highlands Foray (**formerly the Sequanota Foray**) will be held this year from Friday evening, September 24 to the afternoon of Sunday, September 26 at Outdoor Odyssey across the road from Sequanota. Per person fees for the foray will be computed after the number of attendees is determined. We have reserved the Mountain Valley and Adirondack Lodges at Outdoor Odyssey, which accommodate a total of 30 people (based on 2-3 person per room occupancy) for a fee of \$1450 for the weekend. If fewer than 30 people attend, we can instead rent only the Mountain Valley Lodge, which accommodates 18 people, for a prorated fee. The Mountain Valley and Adirondack Lodges are very comfortable and non-primitive facilities, and feature a full kitchen (that we can cook in), a wet bar (foray attendees can serve alcohol) and a game room. Food costs will be in addition to lodging expenses and will be determined once the roster of attendees is finalized, with the input of the attendees. Foray attendees would be able to cook for themselves, or have full or partial catering at whatever level they choose. Estimated cost of the entire weekend is around \$100, depending on the number of attendees. We will have forays on the extensive grounds of Outdoor Odyssey, Camp Sequanota, and in the nearby state parks. Our guest mycologist will be Barrie Overton from Pennsylvania State University, who has given presentations at past NAMA forays. Reservations must be made by July 16, 2004, in order to allow us to determine space requirements, but early reservations are appreciated. To reserve a space, or for further inquiries, please contact Sharon Cooperman: phone: 301-435-7735 (work) 301-587-2737 (home), email: [scoop@mail.nih.gov](mailto:scoop@mail.nih.gov), or mail: 9618 Bristol Ave., Silver Spring, MD 20901.

## Debunking Old Wives' Tales

-Kirk Callan Smith

"old wives' tale *noun* ; a piece of advice or a theory, often related to matters of health, that was believed in the past but which we now know to be wrong."

--Cambridge Dictionary

That phrase is also defined by many mushroom hunters as a ticket to disaster, worthy of dismissing, important to ignore, a shibboleth used as a substantive for seeking more knowledge and self-reliance in a discipline fraught with risk. A mushroom email group, found from a list on one of our MAW web sources

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/MAW-Mail/>

had some posts urging beginners to pick morels because "they are always safe" despite guidance from seasoned foragers who cited some morel imposters that are toxic for many. When I saw a reader seriously offer "an old wives' tale that mushrooms that do not tarnish a silver spoon are safe," that prompted me to respond.

My first course on mushrooms was wonderful, filled with not just all the reasons to enjoy this passionate pursuit, but most importantly, it offered a large number of thoughtful warnings and sound efforts to debunk old waves' tales that can be as deadly as they are silly. While one of these products of fiction and folklore advises that a mushroom eaten by animals is "safe," that ignores the fact that hundreds of yards away might be a squirrel dead on its back in rigormortis from having eaten a "safe" fungi.

Hunting mushrooms for dining, I was advised, is much like parachute jumping -- (1) you don't want to trust somebody else to fold your parachute for you, and (2) if you make a mistake with either parachutes or mushrooms, it may be your last. If somebody, for example, comes to you with mushrooms they identified for you and said they were found growing on grass, what you may not know having not been the one who found them is that they were actually growing on a large root structure just below the surface of leaves and grass. Since the medium a mushroom grows on is one of many important identification factors, that other person's mistake in identification could be your loss, literally.

Certain kinds of mushrooms we think of as edible might be fine for one person but cause a toxic response for others. I was taught during that first course to use a number

of regional field guides and be careful of some, like one I have that is beautifully written with great illustrations but happens to be an English translation of an Italian book worthy of great caution since the identification factors used 10,000 miles away are hardly reliable as a definitive guide for what grows here.

Mistakes can happen for any of us. One of the sons of the famous Mondovi wine making family in California died a few years ago from eating an amanita known by many with names like "Death Cap" for good reason. My first class also included a description of what happens to the body when poisoned by that mushroom and nobody who reads the ghastly things it does, all but like a death warrant until recent medical advancements made it possible for a few lucky souls who can find the right kidney transplant donor in the nick of time, could ever glibly even hint about reliance on any old wives' tale for guidance.

For those who think it is safe to rely solely on "experts" without further thought or study, I have been reminded of emergency doctors who take an extreme position of warning against consumption of any wild mushroom, a position they took after the experience of pumping the stomachs of professional mycologists and their families. Doc Sirocco, still alive at nearly 100 in an old California gold mining town where I was raised, warned my Irish grandmother and other patients to stay away from them for the same reasons. But being a lover of fine cooking with an inquisitive mind, she studied the subject and got help from other immigrant families, mostly Italian, who shared their knowledge and limited her interest to a few choice fungi she could be certain about. Hmm, they did not have groups like MAW around then. While my list of edible mushrooms I trust myself to identify correctly is larger now, those old warnings are still in the back of my mind.

My first class additionally included advice to save a portion of any mushroom eaten so there would be something available to show doctors if it turned out that an error was made. To the inside cover of my first field guide I added two phone numbers, one for the poison control hotline and the second for a leading mycologist in this area. While some say that ink cap mushrooms are wonderful to eat in their early stages, the fact that they cause severe stomach cramps for most who drink alcohol is enough to keep me away from them. It is difficult to think of any mushroom being fit for a good meal, but not fit to consume with a good wine.

## Turkey Tail

-William Needham



Common Name: **Turkey Tail, Yun Zhi, Kawaratake**

Scientific Name: ***Trametes versicolor***

(*Trametes* means "flesh" or "fabric" and refers to the fact that the connective tissue [hyphae] project through the cap to the walls of the pore tube, giving the fungus a fibrous consistency, *versicolor* means multicolored)

Turkey tail is a common bracket fungus that grows on dead deciduous trees in overlapping, leathery semicircular caps. It is characterized by concentric colored bands that may include brown, auburn, green, blue, and yellow segments. The name derives from the rather obvious fact that it resembles a turkey's tail.

**Potpourri:** *Trametes versicolor* hyphae (the individual strands that make up the vegetative portion of the fungus called the mycelium) are 10-40 percent protein and 30-35 percent polysaccharides. Protein bound polysaccharide (PSK); known commercially as Krestin, is an approved anti-cancer drug in Asia, responsible for several hundred million dollars in sales annually.

The medicinal properties of this fungus are anti-tumor and in the stimulation of the body's immune system killer cells. Clinical studies have demonstrated the efficacy of compounds derived from *Trametes versicolor* in the treatment of leukemia and cervical cancer. It has been used to treat a variety of cancers, including breast, lung and colon.

Turkey tail is a very efficient decomposer of wood, recycling the nutrients and minerals back into the ecosystem. The hyphae grow through the wood and secrete laccases which are enzymes that depolymerize the dark lignin that holds the light colored cellulose together. This "white rot" is under study as a means of biopulping, an environmentally friendly alternative to bleaching used in the manufacture of paper.

## Letter From Florida

-Jim Sherry

When Maria and I drove into Florida in February we saw the first signs of spring in the red keys of the maple trees and then we observed the saw palmetto, which is helpful in treating prostate problems and then plenty of the cabbage palm, Florida's state tree, from which is harvested hearts of palm. The latter two are self-seeding palms; unfortunately, Florida has other self-seeding trees which are not popular, such as the alien Australian pine and the punk tree, which has a bark that is so ugly that only an arborist could like it.

Before we left for Florida I spoke with Jim Kimbrough at the University of Florida who authored the book: COMMON FLORIDA MUSHROOMS. We talked about foraging in the Sarasota area and he gave me the names of some NAMA members who live in the area. When we got to Florida we were invited to foray at Myakka State Park by Robert and Rosemary Williams, one of the couples Jim mentioned. We learned that the state is bringing their parks, at least some of them, back to a pre-Columbian state, which means that they are getting rid of their deciduous trees including oaks, though probably not the live oak, which once relieved of its spanish moss, has a grand gothic stateliness. We also learned that no morels grow in Florida and although there are plenty of polypores, few edible ones are found.

Any generalizations about mushrooms in Florida has to take into account that Florida is over 400 miles long- the distance between Washington D.C. and Toronto. This length means that Florida has more than one growing zone. In winter one might find some of the mushrooms that grow during the summer in the northern states. In late winter, unless there is a lot of rain, one may not find too much and then one is up against the dry months- from March through May. On our foray with the Williamses we found the following mushrooms: Laccaria laccata and proxima, Entoloma strictius, Pluteus cervinus, Pycnoporus sanguineus and a few others which we didn't name. Robert was very helpful in identifying the mushrooms that we found- he has published both articles and photographs. We didn't pick anything to eat but we enjoyed immensely our outing with Robert and Rosemary.

Some of the mushrooms that grow in southern Florida are not easily found in more northerly climates and one could say that some exotics are more common in southern Florida. The following are some of mushrooms that are found often in southern

Florida: lactarii (corrugis, hygrophoroides, paradoxus, and volemus), among the boletes: luridus and floridanus, and the Armillaria tabescens and Lycoperdon candidum.

One final note: In the 1990's it was discovered that the fungus, Ganoderma zonatum, causes butt rot in all species of palm trees. It's a white conk polypore that has infected palm trees in every Florida county. All palms are susceptible to it and there is no known cure for it.

## If You Didn't Attend The Wild Foods Tasting,

-Ilona Conolly,  
Culinary Committee Member

You missed sampling such wild delicacies as Shrimp and Morel Croquettes, Garlic Mustard Stir Fry, Bamboo Delight, Oyster Mushroom Chowder, Porcini and Cashew Pate, Mushroom and Shrimp, Venison and Three Bean Chili, Wild Oyster Mushroom Veggie Stir Fry, Crimini Salad, Bamboo Bonanza, Mushroom Turnovers, Risotto with Hen of the Woods, Morels and Chanterelles, Saffron Rice with Black Trumpets, Mildly Wild Pasta, Mushroom Spread, and Chicken with Shiitake and Agaricus Mushrooms. Over 37 members attended MAW's Wild Foods Tasting on Tuesday, May 4<sup>th</sup> and had an opportunity to sample 16 dishes. While the morel season was a disappointment to those of us who recall the bounty of prior years, attendees were nonetheless treated to other wild foods, including game, mushrooms and other edible plants.

Waldemar Poppe cooked the entire evening and treated the crowd to Venison with Polenta and Porcini Sauce and Mushroom Tempura, both of which were wildly popular.

Waldemar and Ilona Conolly donated prizes for the tasting contest including a camera stand, a mushroom spawning kit, a fig tree, a mushroom cookbook and a jar of black chanterelles. Winners were chosen by the members in attendance. Waldemar also gave away a variety of plants from his bountiful garden. Many thanks to the volunteers without whose efforts events such as this would not be possible: Jon Ellifritz, Ray LaSala and Bruce Boyer inspected wild mushrooms and plants before they were cooked and Karin Adams and Gordon Callahan registered attendees at the door. Many other members who hadn't formally volunteered helped out with set up and clean up for which the Culinary Committee is most grateful.

So, if you missed the Wild Foods Tasting, don't miss MAW's next tasting event, the Mushroom Tasting, on Tuesday, October 4<sup>th</sup>. Check the announcement line (301-907-3053, mailbox 41) or the website ([www.mawdc.org](http://www.mawdc.org)) for details. Members are encouraged to share their culinary talents. Attendance will once again be FREE to members in good standing who bring a dish and just \$10/person without a dish. Where can you sample 16 dishes for a mere \$10? We look forward to seeing you in October!

## Virginia State Science And Engineering Fair

-Dan DeSouza

Volunteers from various school systems host a special activity called the Science and Engineering Fair. Each school that participates must meet basic standards of safety, recognize environmental risk, and adhere to adult supervision. Fourteen categories are recognized, including topics such as math, chemistry, botany, and environmental science. Each category is sponsored by a group or company that provides coordination, judging and rewards. Winners receive small stipends or partial scholarships. Virginia school winners are invited to advance to regional levels, then to the statewide level, and finally to the International level. At each level the sponsors may change or meld into a larger group. Special categories may be created out of the basic fourteen by dual judging of selected entries if requested by any acceptable organization that wishes to sponsor, judge, and/or reward special classes. MAW has focused on Virginia since several volunteers reside within the state. The school level has a more limited audience, and an international level presents a serious time and travel commitment (2-3 days). The MAW judges feel this function is a means of educating students, parents, and the general public about mycology. In many cases concerning the study of pollution, the children interact with the wilderness. Most of these students enjoy identifying mushrooms, plants, and animals. We find that casual selling of MAW on the exhibit floor is effective and find much interest. At presentation ceremonies we can even pitch an invitation to join.

On 17 April, 2004, three Virginia members of MAW, Anita Phillips (a mycologist specializing in slime molds), Bruce Boyer (water engineer -purity), and Dan de Souza (electronics engineer), attended the Science



and Engineering Fair as special category judges of Mycology at the statewide level, acting as representatives of MAW. Around 250 students entered the competition.

Firstly, we reviewed the synopsis of each exhibit (Available on site and on [www.rmc.edu/sciencefair](http://www.rmc.edu/sciencefair) Click on the yellow judges button on the left, then click on Abstracts, use vsef as Username, then use view as Password, click submit. The next page lists categories. Click on one and then scroll. Use the back button on your browser to go back to the category page). We narrowed the field to four projects out of seven contemplated, three turned out unrelated to mycology as a science.

Our final step was to conduct interviews and we agreed to award \$100 and a first place certificate to Ms Colston Reid of Dominion High School in Sterling, Virginia. She was interested in bioremediation of aromatic organic pollutants, mostly benzene rings with some specific radicals stuck on. Unsurprisingly she found that most of the major polluters would not send her any specimens. She then made one or two brilliant leaps of intelligence and contacted the paper industry. There is a process that uses a white rot gilled bracket fungus to digest the lignin in a wood chip slurry. This produces a clean cellulose product with no acid residue normal to sulfite processes. The lignin is very close to the structure of the pollutants of interest. Her next jump was recognizing an aniline dye, rhodamine, that is again almost identical to lignin. Her experiment then was to use a measured amount of the dry fungus to digest the dye in a water solution. It worked well. Conclusion: white rot bracket fungus may have application as a filtering element in the water supply. Ms Reid intends to seek the help of mycologists for future mushroom identification.

Another notice was that Ms Justine Arrington of Rustberg High School in Campbell County ran a radiation experiment, using ultra-violet sensitive yeast to find the best filter for ultra-violet light. Test specimens were: welding filters, polycarbonate film, and mechanical sun screen filter mat. While the filter selection was trivial, her method of calibrating a load of exactly 100 yeast buds to each petri dish was impressive. She made a density count just as in a blood count, then added one cc to 10cc of water. She repeated this dilution several times, until 5cc contained exactly the 100 buds she wanted. Unfortunately the use of yeast instead of fungi (both are remotely related) would only justify our award of an honorable mention, consisting of a field guide and certificate.

## The 2004 Moray

-Jon Ellifritz

Our April 23-25 weekend was held again at Clifton Forge, Virginia west of Lexington. Most participants stayed at the Firmstone Manor Bed & Breakfast, a beautiful old Queen Anne Victorian mansion, but Maria and Ken Gibala arrived early and learned that the B&B was a tad overbooked. They graciously volunteered to stay at the Iron Company Inn ten miles away so that the last arrivals would not have to travel further in the dark. That was good news for Karin and John Adams, straggling in belatedly after an encounter with a state trooper, who fortunately steered them in the right direction rather than running them in for stopping on an exit ramp.

Last year our Moray weekend seemed to fall near the end of morel season, or in the middle at higher elevations. This year we couldn't be sure whether we were too early or it was just a poor year due to insufficient rain. Our first outing, to a promising tulip poplar-filled area in Douthat State Park, was a washout (unless Spring Entolomas, Badly-confused Peziza, Devil's Urn, and a scraggly Fawn Mushroom or two are considered great finds). Then we went to the Iron Company Inn and learned that Larry Goldschmidt had stayed there Thursday night and found only one on Friday morning.

After sandwiches at Firmstone, most of us went up the road onto North Mountain while a few, like Derya Slivka's husband Peter and their almost-three-year-old son Owen, chose to relax or play at the B&B. At the first stop on the mountain, Arvina Gadre quickly reaffirmed her Mushroom Queen title, attributing her morel-finding prowess to being a little closer to the ground. (That night we thought her ability might have a different source when we found out that it was her birthday!) At the next site, Eva Neterowicz adopted a tactical approach, positioning herself to the side of and a little behind Arvina, ready to lunge forward at Arvina's slightest nod, bend at the waist, or a just-barely-more-intense-than-usual gaze toward a particular patch of ground. Alas, no luck. Maybe Eva's proximity threw Arvina off her game. Then we tried a different tactic, uttering in his absence Nicky Juntanaroj's never-fail, reverse-prophetic wail: "There's nothing here! We're not going to find anything." Bingo! Within five minutes, Bruce Boyer found two black morels near a streamlet. But this was not the beginning of a morel harvest boom. We then found only a few yellows.

Despite our disappointment at the meager harvest, we had a memorable evening of conversation, wine, cheese, and abundant nibbles and noshes, including a big pot of wild mushroom soup made by our hostess Barbara Jarocka from *prawdziwy grzyb* (*Boletus edulis*) brought from Poland, goodies from Anna and Peter Lassovsky, and Susan Nerlinger and Vladimir Ricar, Alicia and Rob Shipley's Russian salad, Derya's Turkish chicken and grape salad, and Nicky's pork satay (Barbara, with her spoon frequently dipping into the sauce, reminded me of a kid with her finger in the peanut butter jar. She got to keep the leftover sauce since Ray LaSala wasn't there to scarf it up.) We sang Happy Birthday to Arvina before she and Ajit went into Clifton Forge for dinner, and after we were almost too stuffed to waddle, many of us continued our conversations late into the night around a bonfire built by Barbara's companion Charles Towle. Perfect.

### Corrections from the March Newsletter

-Nathan Ballard

- 1) Within the second paragraph of Ray's Black Risotto recipe, both occurrences of 4 \* should be 4 ½. This is intentionally ½ Cup more than is actually added to the rice to allow for evaporation while it is held at a simmer.
- 2) Important! Ray's surname is actually spelled **LaSala** rather than Lasala. Since his donated recipe is worthy of *any* exotic mushroom cookbook, please definitely make a note of this. Apologies Ray.

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