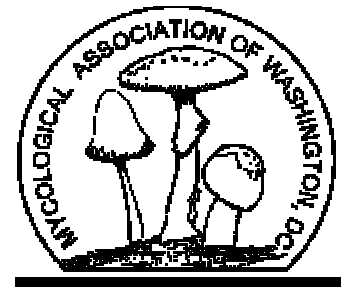


Potomac Sporophore



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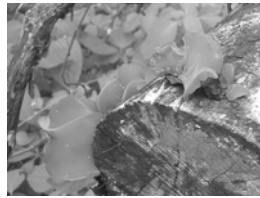
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Wood Ear

-William Needham



Common Name: Wood Ear, Tree Ear, Cloud Ear, Judas's Ear Fungus, Black Fungus, Mo-Ehr ("little ear" in Chinese)

Scientific Name: *Auricularia auricular-judae* (Latin *auris* meaning ear)

A thin, rubbery, ear-shaped fungus that grows in clusters on decaying logs and stumps of deciduous trees characterized by a smooth, almost waxy upper surface that is reddish-brown in color and a hairy undersurface.

Potpourri: The Mo-Ehr is actually an Asian species (*Auricularia polytricha*) that is closely related to the North American Wood Ear. Their similarity in edibility and appearance has led to the use of synonymous common names to refer to both. The "little ear" has been cultivated in China since as early as 600 CE and is widely used in Chinese cooking, particularly in hot and sour soups. In 1994, production of *Auricularia* was 420 million kilograms, 8.5% of total cultivated mushrooms world-wide.

Auricularia has been used in traditional Chinese folk medicine for millennia as a treatment for everything from postpartum weakness to hemorrhoids. Recent laboratory testing revealed that the fungus had a hypoglycemic effect on obese mice and that it reduced the serum LDL cholesterol level of rats by 24%. The lowering of cholesterol and blood sugar may explain the extent of its use in China as a medicinal, as these therapeutic benefits would ameliorate many medical conditions due to "blood-thinning."

The name Judas's Ear given to the *Auricularia* derives from the legend that the tree on which Judas Iscariot hanged himself in atonement for the betrayal of Jesus sprouted ears as a visible curse to his actions.

Pear Puffball

-William Needham



Common Name: Pear Puffball

Scientific Name: *Lycoperdon pyriforme* (*Pyri* from pear and *forme* from shape)

The pear puffball is one of the most common fungi encountered, typically growing in large clusters on tree stumps. It has the shape of an inverted pear, the narrow end down.

Potpourri: The name puffball derives from the manner in which the spores are dispersed. When the puffball matures, a small hole called the ostiole is formed at the top and the spores literally "puff" out (*perdon* is Greek for "breaking wind"). Raindrops that fall on the leathery outer skin of the puffball provide the motive force to expel the spores.

Native Americans used puffballs as an astringent to stop wounds from bleeding and as a poultice for sores. Some tribes are reported to have used the dry spores to stop nosebleeds in this manner and called puffball powder "devil's snuff."

Pear puffballs are edible when immature. This can be determined by breaking one open and to see if the inside is pure white and firm.

Achtung! Use This Common Name! (A Defense of Scientific Binomials)

-Jon Ellifritz

I started a small project in December that has since turned gargantuan. With temporary access to a handful of German-language mushroom cookbooks and field guides, I decided to copy down the German common names of any species that seemed noteworthy, most of whose scientific binomials seemed familiar enough that I had probably come across them in books about North American species. The final list contained about 150 species, but for some there were at least a dozen German common names. Some were familiar; I had heard or read Steinpilz (*Boletus edulis*) and Pfifferling (*Cantharellus cibarius*) before. Others were readily recognizable, for example Zigeuner. I already knew, probably from music, that the word meant gypsy, and wasn't surprised to see it as one of the common names for *Rozites caperata*, given the common name Gypsy in more than one English-language field guide.

Before embarking on the arduous task of translating the entire list of hundreds of common names with the help of a German-English dictionary, I noticed a number of patterns in the list. Most of the names ended in -pilz, -schwamm, or -ling, and a few had -champignon or the diminutive ending -chen. Pilz I already knew as a general term for mushroom or fungus. Schwamm turned out to be the same, but -ling couldn't be found. The likely possibility was that it was similar to the same ending on some English words like yearling, darling, and duckling, a kind of indeterminate "one" with a diminutive meaning of young or small. The German Jährling (yearling) and Liebling (darling) seemed to confirm this. Champignon, of course, was directly from the French word for various mushrooms, especially the edible Meadow Mushroom, *Agaricus campestris*.

Other words and components recurred frequently. Every one of the eight *Agaricus* species had at least one common name containing the word Egerling. There was no Egerling or Eger in the dictionary, but it was presumably connected to the Latin/Greek genus name. And then there were the two dozen species of *Amanita*! All but one (*Amanita caesarea*, or Kaiserling, a choice edible) had at least one common name ending in Knollenblätterpilz (literally, "bulbous gilled mushroom"), Wulstling ("swollen mushroom"), or Streifling ("striped mushroom," probably meaning striate in this case).

The three Streiflings were all members of the *Amanita* group that for a while had its own genus, *Amanitopsis*. They're distinguished particularly

by the lack of a partial veil, and thus the absence of a ring on the stalk, and by the radial cap striations running from the cap edge towards the center. And most *Amanita* species have a bulbous base as a remnant of a universal veil, accounting for Knollen and Wulst in common names for the other 20.

Picture this: Two German farmers who like to hunt edible mushrooms on Sunday afternoons go for a walk in the nearby forest. They spot a stately, pure white mushroom with a white ring on the stalk and a white sock enclosing its base. One exclaims (presumably entirely in German), "Look at the beautiful Spitzhütiger Knollenblätterpilz (Sharp-hatted Bulbous Gilled Mushroom), which I've heard is also called Kegelhütiger Wulstling (Cone-capped Swollen Mushroom)!" His friend replies, "I beg to differ. It's much too early in the year. It has to be the Spitzkegeliger Knollenblätterpilz (Sharp-coned Bulbous Gilled Mushroom), also known as the Kegelhütiger Knollenblätterpilz. You'd know from a third name, the Frühlings Knollenblätterpilz (Spring etc.) that this has to be the one we see before us!"

They've been discussing German common names for two species of Destroying Angel, *Amanita virosa* (literally, poisonous *Amanita*) and *Amanita verna* (Spring *Amanita*), but would "common people" like these actually come up with or use these rather complicated "common" names? They sound more like the appellations coined by mycologists, whether amateur or professional, trying to fit a number of species in one genus, much as Gary Lincoff, author of the Audubon series mushroom field guide, and Dr. Kent McKnight, author of the Peterson series field guide, were required by their publishers to provide "common names" for every fully-described species they covered, even though very few had true common names.

In the absence of such names, the two authors had to coin many. In a review of these two field guides and one other, written for this newsletter years ago, I'm afraid I poked fun at both of them for what I saw as their not entirely rational reactions to a somewhat irrational requirement. I speculated that Gary Lincoff got his revenge by combining food items with the word "slime" for about half of the common names for slime molds ("Tapioca Slime," "Scrambled Egg Slime," "Chocolate Tube Slime," etc.). I learned a couple of years ago that it was actually Sam Ristich, a venerable and renowned mycologist with a puckish sense of humor, at the time probably in his seventies, who had named the slime molds in the book.

As for Dr. McKnight, I said the requirement made him crazy. He didn't want to duplicate the names in the earlier guide, other than a few that actually were common names, so he ended up with a collection of This-caps (about fourteen, such as Coincap and Funnelcap, covering parts of whole genera, and another dozen for individual species)

and That-gills (nine, with five of them covering parts of genera, like Brittle-gill for *Russula* and Pink-gill for *Entoloma*), along with a number of Cavaliers (*Tricholoma* species) and the more plebeian Riders (*Tricholomopsis*).

Asheville

-Paul Goland

The joint NAMA/Mycological Society of America Foray at Asheville, July 13-21, 2004, was a huge success (over 400 species collected and identified). It was headquartered at the University of North Carolina at Asheville: we overnighted in student dorms, and activities were in several classroom buildings on the campus. I wound up managing the vendor room through the weekend, turning the key over to Leon Shernoff, editor of *Mushroom the Journal*, for the several days remaining when MSA had its main activities.

The NAMA Trustees meeting was held on Thursday, July 15, a day later than scheduled because NAMA's Executive Secretary, Judy Roger, couldn't get out of Chicago on time. So Bruce Boyer, Judy Roberts, Tim Geho, and I took the opportunity to foray for mushrooms on Purchase Knob, 40 miles West of Asheville, on Wednesday. The Trustees meeting opened with the announcement of new clubs in Georgia and West Virginia, with another club forming in Alabama. Also the Blue Ridge club in North Carolina is reforming after being inactive for 15 years.

Let me jump to the exciting news that next year's NAMA Foray will be hosted by Tom Volk in La Crosse, Wisconsin, the third weekend in July 2005. Tom is a teaching and authoring mycologist, very popular nationwide.

Mushroom Toxicity. Dr. Beug recommends that clubs contact local hospitals to let them know that we have people qualified to identify mushrooms as to their toxicity. In turn, we should ask the hospitals to notify us about mushroom toxicity cases so that we may report them to Dr. Beug. For many years, the only reliable reporting nationwide has been in Colorado, because of the work of club people in Denver.

Vouchering of Mushroom Species. The Field Museum has vouchered and archived specimens of all species collected at NAMA national forays for the last 6 years. NAMA is granting \$3000 to help pay for an intern to carry on this process.

Photography. Next year, only digital photographs will compete in the NAMA photography contest. NAMA will help contestants who use film to convert images to digital for the contest.

Bruce raised the issue of clubs paying for club rep's attendance at NAMA Trustees meetings. Only one other rep raised his hand when asked whether the club paid the bill (\$75 this year), so I

won't recommend MAW continuing to budget for this expense next year.

I asked about NAMA's interest in doing something about the FDA 1999 rules concerning selling wild-gathered mushrooms. It was discussed, but there was no interest in pursuing the matter.

Besides the folks mentioned above, MAW members there included Gordon Callahan, Ray LaSala, Jim Sherry and Maria Dobrowsky, John and Becky Plischke, John and Kim Plischke, and Bill Roody and Donna Mitchell.

The West Virginia Foray

-Jim Sherry

The annual West Virginia Foray took place in Lost River, WV on the weekend of Aug 8th at the Lost River Retreat Center. Over 20 people attended. The weather was perfect. Friday night we met for conversation and wine and cheese; members were very generous in the dishes they brought, especially the DeSouzas, whose delicacies and home grown figs were a grand treat. The rooms were pleasant, with a private bath and knotty pine paneling on both the walls and the ceiling. The food was quite adequate and our hosts were friendly but not intrusive. Maria was quite impressed with the fellow who ran the place because he joined in to help his servers wash the dishes—he was a Baptist minister who politely refused an offer of a toast.

The next morning we drove to the Lost River State Park and split into two groups and forayed until lunch and forayed again in the afternoon. The ground seemed dry and the mushrooms were not plentiful. We found some chanterelles however (hasn't everyone this year, ask Larry). Though no one took home great bundles of edible mushrooms, the foray was a great success as a learning experience. Bill Roody and Donna Mitchell were delighted with the range of mushrooms found. At last count, we found 167 species of mushrooms. Also, we found three mushrooms that were never previously recorded in West Virginia (*Hygrophorus canescens*, *Hypomyces lateritium* and *Beauveria bassiana*). Additionally, 76 mushrooms were found that had never been recorded for the county that we were in: Hardy County.

On Saturday evening, Bill Roody presented a slide program on chanterelles and boletes. Chanterelles are the most consumed mushroom world-wide. There are 40 species on our earth. The nice thing about chanterelles is that once you get the hang of it, they are easy to recognize. That's not as true with boletes. Maria bites into boletes, if they don't bite back, they have passed the first test. Bill said that boletes grow in three types of woods: (1) conifers, (2) oaks, hickory and beech, and (3) aspen and birch. So, if you know the woods you are foraying in, you might have a

better chance at naming that bolete you find. After Bill spoke, Nan Goland sang and played the guitar. Nan is a professional who has come out with a C.D. She is also like a Greek chorus, making cogent remarks when she is moved to do so.

Maria, Paul Goland and I had what might be called a West Virginia experience. Saturday, after the foray, we decided to drive through the park, so we drove on a high ridge for quite awhile and finally came down the mountain but not before we had to negotiate three hairpin curves. Paul kept asking me to check the temperature gauge. When we came off the mountain we turned left and drove for 14 miles before someone suggested that we stop and ask at a house for directions. Guess who that was. When Maria got back in the car I heard the news that I didn't want to hear—we had to go back over the mountain that was 14 miles away. Boo Hoo.

The NAMA Foray

-Jim Sherry

We drove down to Asheville in 10 hours (500 miles) looking at mimosa trees and finally seeing a road sign for Asheville (24 miles north of the city). As we approached the city we marveled at the sight of the Pisgah Mountains because their peaks were so sharply defined, unlike the 'loaf' effect of the Alleghenies.

Our accommodations at the university were O.K., except that the elevator in the dorm was out of commission, and once the mattress springs on our bunks were lowered by Paul Goland and Walt Sundberg it was possible to get in and out of bed without using a chair. No complaint about the meals—anytime I get tasty scrambled eggs from a steam table and 20 different pastries, well... and Maria loved the grits and the pesto.

We arrived a day early and went on an unscheduled foray—didn't find much and did not go on any more, principally because my knee started to ache. There were six other forays in the Pisga Mountains. Over 400 species were found—a modest success for the area. I kept hearing that it had rained in the area continually on previous days and weeks but the ground did not look wet. Someone said that the trees weren't ready to give up their 'carbs' because the slow warm-up of the weather had made them uncertain that they could afford to give up their carbs and without the carbs—no mushrooms!

We attended lectures every day. Everyone had a slide show to present. John Plishke III revealed tips on how he makes his prize-winning photographs—John, one of our most knowledgeable members, has a very artistic sense of what makes a good photo. Tom Volk's lecture on species was greatly anticipated but he was only able to say that no matter which method is used there is no absolutely definitive way of deciding

whether two mushrooms are the same or a different species. Apparently, DNA research is an answer but not 'the' answer. On toxicology Dr. Michael Beug said that mushrooms are a relatively safe food (what food won't poison someone, somewhere at some time). Only one death from a mushroom has been reported in the last three years in America. Still, Dr. Beug no longer serves a mushroom that he has served over a thousand times to his friends (*Gyromitra esculenta*) because he has become more convinced of its toxicity. Bill Roody, another renowned MAW member, gave an interesting presentation on mushrooms that grow on dead trees (e.g., woods ear) and on dead parts of living trees (e.g., hen of the woods) and on living trees (e.g., chicken). Of course these mushrooms and others that Bill mentioned will continue to thrive after their host dies.

We learned that NAMA's voucher program describes and records one of each species of mushroom found on each NAMA foray and then dries it (dried, they last for centuries) and stores it so that it will serve as evidence that any particular mushroom said to be found at a site was found in that particular place and on that date.

We also learned that the four white amanitas are now collapsed into one species (*bisporigera*); that hen of the woods is a benign parasite that slowly kills its host; that of an estimated 1.5 million fungi, 70,000 have been described; that only about 10% of fungi are big enough to be seen with the naked eye and that about 60 to 80 percent of mushrooms found east of the Rockies are not found west of the Rockies, and vice versa.

Fifteen members of MAW attended the foray. Bruce Boyer again helped to serve the wild mushrooms that were cooked by Chef Ursula. We had dishes with *laetiporus*, *Lactarius volemus*, chanterelles, black trumpet, *pleurotis* and donated shiitake and morels.

On the way back to Maryland we didn't see any cicada tree-damage until we reached Strasburg, VA, but we did see lots of kudzu, which as a stonewall covering rivals ivy, but this stuff is draping over trees and shrubbery like dust covers on furniture. It's a bit spooky.

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 (www.outdoorodyssey.org), across the road from Sequanota. Fees, including meals, will be \$120 per person for double occupancy and \$95 per person for triple occupancy. We have reserved the Adirondack Lodge at Outdoor Odyssey, which accommodates 12-18 people (based on 2-3 person per room occupancy). The Adirondack Lodge is a very comfortable and non-primitive facility, and features a full kitchen (that we can cook in), a wet bar (foray attendees can serve alcohol), a game room and a hot tub.

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.

For further inquiries, please contact Sharon Cooperman: phone: 301-435-7735 (work), 301-587-2737 (home), email: scoop@mail.nih.gov, or mail: 9618 Bristol Ave., Silver Spring, MD 20901.

To reserve a space, please send your check with the form below to: Sharon Cooperman, 9618 Bristol Ave., Silver Spring, MD 20901.

LAUREL HIGHLANDS FORAY REGISTRATION FORM

Name of Attendee(s): _____

Address: _____

Phone Number: _____ **Number of Attendees:** _____

Email: _____

Amount Enclosed: _____