

## PREZ SEZ

Hello fellow mushroom people,

Have you noticed it, that thing that is happening? That thing that creeps up on us every year? The daylight begins a little earlier and ends a little later with the passing of each day. Yes indeed, spring draws near. AAHHHH.



Kevin Trim, SVIMS President

With the spring comes the promise of one of our favorite treats, the morel.

What more needs to be said except that morels make the winter worth putting up with.

Before I go any further I would like to clarify something from the last Prez Sez just in case the attempt at humour did not translate well. For the record, I love our Mayan friends to the South. They are not only great people, but a great people. The Mayans also made the coolest (Cont. P2)

### VOLUME 15, ISSUE 2

#### IN THIS ISSUE:

Prez Sez	P.1-2
New Members	P.2
Upcoming Events	P.3
Call for Photos	P.4
A Cautionary Tale/Morel Mushrooms	P.5
Fungi Flashes	P.6
Survivor's Banquet	P.7-8
Spore Dispersal	P.8

### MARCH 2012

Book Reviews	P.9-10
The Art of Lucy Martin	P.10
Tom Maler's Super Soup	P.11
Growing Your Own	P.12 -13
Tales from the Spore Side	P.13-14
SVIMS Executive	P.14
The Last Word	P.14

## START 'EM YOUNG!

How about this for a playground for your junior mycologists?

Only snag is you have to travel to



Stockholm, Sweden where **Shannon Berch** spotted this fungi forest at Arlanda International Airport.

## PREZ SEZ (CONTD)

calendar ever and I can hardly wait to see the next edition.

In regard to the Mayan calendar and how a lot of people are all in a tizzy over the world ending and all that, let it be known that just because a calendar ends doesn't mean everything else may as well. If that were the case then we would all be freaking out every year when our regular calendars end.

On the subject of calendars, it has been brought to my attention that our SVIMS calendar has a bit of a hiccup in April of this year. Yes, April 10 and 11 repeat themselves and that throws the rest of the month out of whack, but try not to think of this as an error, think of it more as a clever way to get 2 extra days to go mushroom hunting. Right in the middle of morel season, what could be more convenient?



Kevin Trim identifying mushrooms at the Royal Roads Foray in February. Photo credit: Heather Leary

John & Lynn Greene  
Serge & Lisa Baillargeon  
Cameron Noble  
Lisa Rollo  
Chris Dziadyk  
Myra & Matt Yaman  
Wilmar Blizzard  
Dave Patton  
Erin Feldman

**WELCOME TO OUR  
NEW MEMBERS!**

### FUNGIFAMA DEADLINE

Please submit your stories,  
announcements, and photos by  
**AUGUST 1st** for the next  
edition of the newsletter.

[jillstanjs@hotmail.com](mailto:jillstanjs@hotmail.com)

Don Ollsin  
Kaeley Jeffery  
Bill Shire  
Jen Wladichuk  
Ian Shamus Lennon  
Barry Ford  
Gerald & Marlee Loiselle  
Brian Ainscough

# UPCOMING

Mar. 17th, 2012

## **SVIMS Mushroom Feast in Chinatown**

Golden City Restaurant  
5:30pm

April 5th, 2102, 7pm

## **SVIMS meeting, Pacific Forestry Centre**

Speaker: Efren Cazares  
Topic: Ramaria in the Pacific North West Forests

May3rd, 2012, 7pm

## **SVIMS meeting, Pacific Forestry Centre**

Speaker: Duane Sept  
Topic: Mushroom Photography—Tips and Tricks  
The author of *Common Mushrooms of the Northwest* (and others) will also be selling and signing his books.

Sept. 4th, 2012, 7pm

## **SVIMS meeting, Pacific Forestry Centre**

Speakers: Andy McKinnon & Shannon Berch  
Topic: The first ever Radical Mycology Convergence—Truffling in the North African Desert

Oct. 4th, 2012, 7pm

## **SVIMS meeting, Pacific Forestry Centre**

Speakers: Dan Luoma & Joyce Eberhart  
Topic: Hypogeous Fungi

October 19-21, 2012

## **SVIMS Annual Foray**

Forestry Research Centre, Lake Cowichan  
\$129 + tax, 2nts accommodation, 4 meals, forays

Nov. 1, 2012

## **SVIMS meeting, Pacific Forestry Centre**

Speaker: Britt Bunyard  
Topic: TBA

## FURTHER AFIELD

Aug. 16-19

## **Telluride Mushroom Festival**

[www.shroomfest.com](http://www.shroomfest.com)

Aug. 31-Sept. 3

## **NAMA Southwest Regional Foray**

Portal, AZ  
\$260 [www.namyo.org/events](http://www.namyo.org/events)

Sept. 28-30, 2012

## **Foray Newfoundland and Labrador**

Terra Nova National Park  
[www.nlmushrooms.ca](http://www.nlmushrooms.ca)  
Oct 12-14, 2012

Dec. 13-16, 2012

## **NAMA Annual Foray**

Scotts Valley, CA. [www.namyo.org](http://www.namyo.org)

# **SUBMIT YOUR PHOTOS AND GRAPHIC ART FOR THE 2013 CALENDAR**

**SVIMS's annual calendar** celebrates the joy of mushrooming and informs people about the variety of mushrooms growing on southern Vancouver Island.

**SVIMS members are encouraged to  
submit up to 15 digital photos or graphic art  
before June 1<sup>st</sup>, 2012.**

## **Criteria for submissions of photos and graphic art:**

Digital photographs have been taken by and graphic art has been created by members of SVIMS in good standing.

The submissions may illustrate:

- the diversity of mushrooms found on southern Vancouver Island, both edibles and non-edibles
- mushroom cookery or crafts
- interaction of mushrooms with people, animals, other organisms, or the environment
- SVIMS events or activities

Submissions are visually appealing and artistic.

Photos have not been retouched.

Each submission is accompanied by some interesting information about it, e.g. habitat, when it was taken, the recipe.

Submissions of specific mushrooms are identifiable at least to genus.

Each photo is available with a minimum of 2,000 pixels in width if in landscape orientation, more in portrait

Photo size is approximately 600x800 pixels when submitted. If selected the larger size must be available when requested.

Each submission finally selected for the calendar was created by a different photographer, i.e. no more than one submission will finally be selected from each person who submits.

**Please send all submissions before June 1<sup>st</sup> 2012  
by email to [seagulls@islandnet.com](mailto:seagulls@islandnet.com) (note size above) or on a disc or memory stick  
to Mabel Jean Rawlins**



Oluna Ceska  
helping with identification at the  
Royal Roads  
Foray.

Photo credit: Jill Stanley



## MOREL MUSHROOMS

Jane Whitledge

Softly they come  
thumbing up from  
firm ground

protruding unharmed.  
Easily crumbled  
and yet

how they shouldered  
the leaf and mold  
aside, rising

unperturbed,  
breathing obscurely,  
still as stone.

By the slumping log,  
by a dappled aspen,  
they grow alone.

A dumb eloquence  
seems their trade.  
Like hooded monks

in a sacred wood  
they say:  
Tomorrow we are gone.

from *Decomposition: An Anthology of Fungi Poems*  
Edited by Roehl and  
Chadwick

Paul Kroeger pondering over  
this one at the Foray.

Photo credit: Heather Leary



## A CAUTIONARY TALE! (FOR KEVIN?)

To: Billy Renswald

Subject: RE: morel spot

Hahaha are you mad? It's not what you think, I didn't follow you anywhere.

Last year you emailed me a photo of you holding 3 big bags of morels. You were telling people about how you have this secret spot and this and that, how nobody else knows where it is, how you eat on them for weeks.

Well, you should know something funny my friend. When you take photos with your phone, no matter where you are on this earth, within that photo is stored your exact latitude and longitude. It's called geotagging. All I did was downloaded your photo, found the latitude and longitude coordinates stored in the photo, and within a couple minutes I pulled up an aerial view of your location on the computer. It pinpointed your exact location within feet!!! Then I knew you would be going out soon so I had to beat you to it.

Sorry if you're mad though!!

As frightening as it may sound, Jason is pretty much right. Geotagging does exist, and by default it's active on many smartphone devices. For Billy Renswald, he learned about geotagging the hard way. "I have it turned off now. It's a neat feature, but it cost me my favorite morel spot. Now I'll be spending the next 20 years trying to beat my neighbor to my spot."

Asked if he remained friends with his neighbor following this experience, Renswald replied, "No comment."

excerpted from:

<http://www.sheersoycandles.com/blogs/articles/3156552-morel-mushroom-enthusiast-loses-secret-spot-to-high-tech-hunter>

# FUNGI-FLASHES

## LANDFILL-EATING FUNGUS

Globe and Mail, Feb 4, 2012

Yale University students have found a potential natural solution to crowded landfills: a fungus that eats polyurethane, the common plastic found in stubbornly non-degradable household items. The fungus, called *Pestalotiopsis microspora*, was discovered during a rainforest expedition in Ecuador. It's able to survive solely on polyurethane, and, according to Fast Company, it can break down the plastic even in airless conditions, such as the bottom of a landfill.



## NO JOKE ABOUT QUORN

According to the Centre for Science in the Public Interest (Dec. 11, 2011), consumption of this fungus-based meat substitute has caused reactions in some people such as nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, breathing difficulties and hives. Quorn contains the vat-grown soil mold *Fusarium venenatum*. The CSPI, a Canadian food safety watchdog group, has been warning the FDA about the allergic-type reactions, and had called for this brand-new food to be removed from the marketplace in 2002, citing the incidence of illness associated with it. Nearly 5% of British consumers of Quorn reported being allergic to the fungus-based meat.



## DIGESTING DIAPERS

Utne Reader, Jan-Feb 2012

Normally the only time dirty diapers and dinner appear in the same sentence is when the baby once again interrupts meal-times with an inconvenient call to action. But Alethia Vazquez-Morillas of Mexico City's Autonomous Metropolitan University is fond of talking about how to feast on food—specifically, oyster mushrooms—grown on used diapers. According to Conservation (Fall 2011), oyster mushrooms thrive on cellulose, which is a primary constituent of disposable diapers. Cellulose takes centuries to biodegrade in the airless confines of a landfill, while oyster mushrooms can eat it up in two short months, after which, of course, people eat up the mushrooms. One snag is that the diapers must be steam-sterilized to kill any bacteria or other fungi that could outcompete the oyster mushrooms for living space on the diapers.



A use for coffee grounds? An enterprising pair of college grads are recycling the waste as a growing medium for their gourmet mushroom kits. For more information, go to <http://crispgreen.com/2012/01/turning-recycled-coffee-grounds-into-gourmet-mushrooms/>



## SURVIVOR'S BANQUET SATURDAY, JANUARY 14, 2012

story and photos by Jean Johnson

Once again the Gordon Head Lawn Bowling Club was the setting for our Club's annual collective feast. And it was an international feast this year.

Some of the 52 people who attended managed to put together the following menu representing food from around the world:

Greek Pita Bread  
Vancouver Island Venison Pepperoni  
Japanese Curry Chicken Balls  
Southern Bohemian Kalajda Soup  
Homemade Raw Sauerkraut Salad  
Barley Risotto  
Mushroom and Asparagus Strudel  
Creamy Coconut Rice with Shitake  
Thai Green Curry Coconut Yam  
Czech Kuba (A meatless Christmas mushroom bread dish)  
African Chicken  
Spanakopita

Even the dessert table had Japanese Cacao and Orange Mushroom cookies and an Italian Tiramisu. There were so many other wonderful dishes, as well. This is such a creative pot-luck dinner and demonstrates that our club members are not just good foragers - they are also good cooks!

Our Survivor's Banquet is special but what makes it extraordinarily special is that it is usually held close to **John Preidt's** Birthday. His partner, **Chris Tomaschuk**, always brings a huge birthday cake to share. This year celebrated John's 79th birthday and 60 years since he immigrated to Canada.

**Matt Larmour** did his usual excellent job of arranging the hall rental, clean-up and payment for the night.





Talking about clean-up, I went into the kitchen to find a cloth and surprised **John Dennis, Bernie Stanley, and Steve Johnson**. All were washing dishes and actually looking cheerful about it.

Our new President, **Kevin Trim**, did a great job of running the auction and the Club made \$293. Our Treasurer/ Membership director, **Barbara Pendergast** was kept extremely busy at the her sign-up table. She's where the action is, whether it is buying a magazine, purchasing Chinese dinner tickets, or making sure your membership is current.

There were several hotly contested auction items but in the

end all of us came home with full bellies and happy hearts.

For 5 relatively calm days in late October, the authors caught spores produced by mushrooms of *Suillus brevipes*, *Suillus tomentosus*, *Inocybe lacera*, *Laccaria laccata*, *Thelephora americana*, and *Lactarius rufus* fruiting in the Oregon Dunes National Recreation Area near Florence, Oregon under shore pine, Sitka spruce, Douglas-fir, and western hemlock. They found that the vast majority of basidiospores (95%) produced by the shortest mushrooms, i.e. *Inocybe lacera* with average cap height of 2.8 cm, fell within 3 cm of the stem while those of the tallest mushrooms, *Lactarius rufus* at 5.1 cm average cap height, fell mostly within 58 cm of the stem. Part of this difference was ascribed to the fact that spores released from taller mushrooms will more easily clear the boundary layer of still air at the surface of the forest floor than spores released from shorter mushrooms. Another relevant factor was spore volume with smaller spores moving further from the source. Spore volume was smallest in the slippery jacks ( $65 \mu\text{m}^3$  in *Suillus brevipes* and  $84 \mu\text{m}^3$  in *Suillus tomentosus*) and largest in *Laccaria laccata* ( $279 \mu\text{m}^3$ ). Although this research seems to raise the question of how, then, these mushrooms disperse any meaningful distance, the authors point out that if just 5% of the *Lactarius rufus* spores make it beyond 58 cm that may still amount to 50 million spores as Buller (1909) estimated that a single mushroom may release  $1 \times 10^9$  m or a billion spores.

## SPORE DISPERSAL

**95% of basidiospores fall within 1 m of the cap**

Tera Galante, Thomas Horton, and Dennis Swaner. 2011. *Mycologia* 103(6): 1175-1183.



## NEW PUBLICATIONS



### Mushroom

by Nicholas P. Money

Oxford University Press, 201 pgs. \$24.95

Published Oct. 2011

The overnight appearance of mushrooms in a meadow or on a suburban lawn is a marvelous sight. It is one of many awe-inspiring, magical processes that have evolved among the fungi, yet this group remains the least studied and most poorly understood kingdom of organisms. In *Mushroom*, Nicholas Money offers a vibrant introduction to the world of mushrooms, investigating the science behind these organisms as well as their enduring cultural and imaginative appeal. Beginning with the basics of mushroom biology, Money leads us through a history of mushroom research, painting portraits of the colorful characters involved in their study - among them, Beatrix Potter, the celebrated author and creator of *Peter Rabbit*, and Captain Charles McIlvaine, a Civil War veteran who engaged in a dangerous quest to determine the edibility of every mushroom in North America. Money also discusses the uses of mushrooms today, exploring their importance as food and medicine, their use as recreational drugs, and as the cause of horrific poisonings. A cultural, natural, and scientific history in one, *Mushroom* is a must-read for mycophiles, mushroom gatherers, and nature lovers alike.

For a review, read here:

<http://blogs.scientificamerican.com/scicurious-brain/2011/11/28/book-review-mushroom/?print=true>

For an interesting interview with author Nicolas Money, click here:

<http://www.npr.org/2012/01/18/145339196/the-man-who-studies-the-fungus-among-us>

### The Book of Fungi

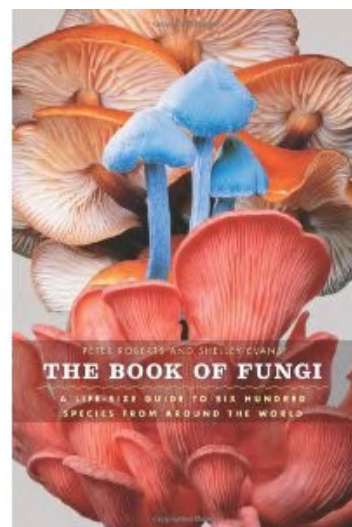
by Peter Roberts and Shelley Evans

University of Chicago Press, 656pp, \$54.93

Published April 2011

Review by Ron Post excerpted from *Sporeprints*, Oct. 2011

The best feature of this immense pictorial of the world's fungi is its simplicity, with location maps and useful tidbits of information on every page and actual size photos rivaling any you've seen in other books.



One of the real joys for me (besides scientific accuracy and great color rendition) is the 100-page section on “brackets, crusts and jelly fungi.”

You might believe that a geographic bias of two eminent British scientists would show through in the text. Yet these two authors always seem to link in interesting ways the many similar European and North American species. Even the species that grow in Eastern North America versus the West are noted appropriately, and the known relation between European and North American species is usually addressed.

I found all the British common names somehow quaint and not disconcerting at all. Perhaps we’ll all be calling our hot-house mushrooms (*Leucocoprinus birnbaumii* aka *Lepiota lutea*) by the name Plantpot Dapperling, and hereafter our *Russulas* will be known as Brittlelegills. (One of the rare confusing terms I encountered occurs in the description of *Leccinum holopus* as edible but tasteless and “pappy,” meaning mushy. Is this, too, a Britishism?)

Other local quibbles can be found. My search for a photo of our common, pink-spored *Pluteus* that grows from wood turned up *P. atromarginatus*. In my experience in the Northwest, *P. cervinus* is much more common. Maybe I’m just out of date! Anyway, I found that *cervinus* does get a mention in the text, if not a photograph. As with most mushroom books, one must be aware that searching a general reference requires some familiarity with the names of the mushrooms and their look-alikes, local and faraway, past and present.

However, one needn’t read far to find information about the important macroscopic differences between similar species in this book. (Some readers will be relieved that microscopic characteristic are all but dispensed with.) The authors also decline to promote strange color definitions such as “yellowish-buff”, sticking to much simpler descriptions. I wasn’t left scratching my head trying to imagine was “vinaceous-brown” might look like since much easier terms such as “reddish” or simply “yellow-orange” or gray’brown” are most often encountered in the short descriptions with the photos.

Of course, one must take note of the fact that 600 species are included in this book and many of them vary in color! The Book of Fungi is not meant to be a field guide (as it weighs about two kilograms). No identification key is provided, although an introductory guide using physiological types is very helpful. On the whole, I would have to present this book as a “must-read.” Its price tag (I found copies from \$35-\$55) should be no barrier since the overall excellence makes it stand out as one of the foremost mushroom books in the English language.



## Going to San Francisco this spring?

Check out Lucy Martin’s exhibition, **Secrets of the Forest: Portraits of Wild Mushrooms Paintings in Gouache and Watercolor** at the Botanical Gardens in Golden Gate Park, showing until April 26th.

“Lucy is interested in the process of decay and transformation that is constantly going on in the forest as organic life flourishes, dies, breaks down and is recreated as new life. In her art she celebrates the way that fungi contribute to this process and embody the truth of the cycle of life. Her hope as an artist is to awaken a sense of the mystery, strangeness and beauty of the natural world.”

See more of her beautiful artwork at her website:

[www.lucymartinart.com](http://www.lucymartinart.com)

Did you miss out on **Tom Maler's** delicious soup at the Survivor's Banquet? Well, now you can duplicate the soup everyone was raving about, thanks to Tom's generosity in sharing this recipe .



### **Pravá Jihočeská Kulajda (Real Southern Bohemian Kulajda soup)**

**Notes:** Use fresh or frozen mushrooms, don't bother with dried ones. Those are suitable for Czech potato mushroom soup, a completely different tasting and equally delicious soup. I also use frozen mushrooms for this recipe--any chanterelles, lobsters, hedgehogs, all *boletes* and *suillus* are all good. I have never tried it with pines which I'd save those for pine-specific recipes.

**Word of Caution:** When using frozen mushrooms for any recipe, make sure that you don't let them thaw out first. I chop them up frozen and start sauteing or boiling them from the frozen state. It is amazing, but they largely retain their texture that way. If you let them thaw out first, you get a mushy blob. So for the chopping, I use an old shoe box, put a small cutting board in it and use a meat cleaver and chop right in the box. Otherwise, you'll have mushroom bits all over the kitchen, including the ceiling.

The amounts of mushrooms and general quantities are flexible; the more mushrooms, the better of course. Don't add too much water. The soup is supposed to be thick, but the sour cream with flour and the

egg will thicken it.

### **INGREDIENTS:**

fresh wild mushrooms (the more the better)  
6 large potatoes  
caraway seed  
allspice  
peppercorns  
2 bay leaves  
1 cup sour cream  
2 tsp flour  
1-2 tablespoon vinegar  
4 eggs (mixed with a fork or a mixer)  
fresh chopped dill

### **METHOD:**

Boil potatoes and mushrooms in salted water (I'd start with about a litre of water) and immediately add caraway seed, all spice, bay leaves and peppercorns; once potatoes are soft add sour cream with flour mixed, stir it up and boil for a while. Add salt, vinegar and chopped dill to taste and slowly add eggs while stirring and boil another 3 minutes on low heat let sit 5 more minutes and serve. At the table, add a bit of sour cream into each bowl of soup.

I actually boil everything longer than the recipe says and it does not do any harm. It usually takes about an hour.



## GARY SAWAYAMA ON GROWING YOUR OWN MUSHROOMS



photo credit: Donna Humphries

When SVIMS members received a notice from Kevin about Mushroom Kits for Christmas from Scott Henderson, a member of the Vancouver Mycological Society who had recently acquired Western Bill thought make a mas gift, included myself as one of the gift recipients. Scott packed a trunk-load of kits in his sedan and ferried them to Victoria the week before Christmas when he planned the holiday visit with his mom. Given limited parking on the Oak Bay street where she lived, the arrangement was for me to phone ahead so that he could meet me out at the curb where he had parked. I'm sure that

*Why did you decide to start growing your own?*

Biologicals from Chalmers., I the kits would terrific Christ-and naturally I

Scott repeated this with dozens of other customers. To curious neighbours it might have seemed like they were witnessing non-stop drug deals in the heart of Oak Bay with cash being peeled from wallets for plastic bags from the trunk of a black sedan.

The Grey Oyster kit was gifted to a friend (Donna Humphries) and I retained the Shiitake kit. Each kit resembled a rolled turkey roast about 15cm dense substrate composed of Red Alder hardwood sawdust, millet grain, wheat bran and crushed limestone. Upon open-cooked 5 days earlier. It

*What's the kit like?*

in diameter and 20cm on end, packed into a clear plastic bag. Inside was a posed of Red Alder hardwood sawdust, millet grain, wheat bran and crushed ing the Christmas gift it could be mistaken for a bag of desiccated oat groats came with Ikea-like instructions on a single sheet of paper, minus the Allen

I activated the Shiitakes a few days before Christmas. dozen that were consumed with cubes of seared tuna. been letting the block rest before re-activating in a later but her yield in terms of quantity and size were crop.

*What has been your yield so far? Do you expect more?*

By New Year's Eve I had harvested over 2 So far I have only managed one crop and have few weeks. Donna started her Oysters a week spectacular. She is presiding over a second

*Under what conditions did you grow your mushrooms?*

The instructions called for drainage slits in the plastics bags after which the substrate blocks were thoroughly soaked, then placed in an unheated space out of direct sunlight. For the Shiitakes I constructed an elaborate tent of clear plastic with a damp sponge for humidity. Donna did the opposite for her Oysters – her success speaks for itself.

I have a poor track record in nurturing anything – these low maintenance made for people like me. The same can't be said for Donna who nevertheless day to day changes in her pet block of sawdust. My description of the kits is ignores the complexity of spawn husbandry, and formulation/inoculation of clean room conditions before they were ever packed in sterile bags in the trunk

*What surprised you the most about the process?*

mushroom kits were was delighted with the misleading because it substrate blocks in of a black sedan.

*Has this experience  
of growing mushrooms  
hooked you?*



Most definitely. Donna returned from the Northwest Flower and Garden Show with bags of spawn plugs for other wild mushroom species cultivated by Fungi Perfecti, a supplier from Olympia. We will try our hand at inoculating logs that will be partially buried to force fruiting. We are also exploring with Scott Henderson a spring or fall mini-workshop in Victoria on garden cultivation of wild mushrooms – a substantially shorter version of the one offered by Bill Chalmers in past years in Aldergrove.

## Tales from the Spore Side

### Tales from the Spore Side

#### Adventures of a Non-Mycologist

by Heather Leary

**When  
people find  
out I'm part  
of a  
mycology  
club they  
usually have  
one of two  
reactions.**

People who know me from my work in public relations and event planning often look puzzled. Me trampling around the forest looking for 'shrooms' doesn't fit with the corporate, downtown version of me that they have seen.

Those who know of my love for food and wine nod knowingly. It seems a natural next step, looking for and harvesting food from the wild, especially given the bounty that is available year round right at our doorstep. Occasionally they raise their eyebrows (no, not those kinds of mushrooms).

Confounded or not, what their reactions have in common is their increased appreciation of me as a daredevil, a risk taker and something of a magician. Maybe it's because mushrooms rarely make the news unless they have killed someone or saved someone's life. Maybe it's because in this part of the world people think nothing of venturing into the woods to pick wild berries while we're taught to leave dangerous mushrooms alone. No one looks intrigued when I tell them I spent the afternoon picking blackberries.

I used to try to explain my activities scientifically, clarifying that I'm not a mycologist, that the mushrooms I pick are relatively easy to identify, that there is no danger. But as I had more and more of these conversations, I came to realize these protestations were not what interested people.

It seems, for many, mushrooms hold a great deal of mystery. They have a kind of "unknowableness" that elevates them to a mythic status. People who pick mushrooms are like mystics or conjurers whose spells reveal hiding places and whose ancient wisdom makes identifying them possible. And on top of that, mushroom people have an excellent storytelling tradition. (Cont'd P.12)

**SVIMS EXECUTIVE  
2011-2012**

**President**

Kevin Trim

**Past President**

Richard Winder

**Vice President**

Lee Smith

**Treasurer/  
Membership**

Barbara Pendergast

**Assistant**

Teresa Klemm

**Secretary**

Kem Luther

**Forays**

Adolf & Oluna Ceska

**Fungifama  
Newsletter**

Jill Stanley

**Reviewer**

Shannon Berch

**Publicity/Media  
Contact**

Heather Leary

**Refreshments**

Dianne Humphrey

**Librarian**

Helga Wolnicki

**Listserve**

Kevin Trim

**Webmaster**

Ian Gibson

**Director**

Sinclair Philip

**Director**

Bruce Pendergast

**Director**

Julie Anne LeRose

And I must admit, mushrooms continue to hold a great deal of mystery for me – just as much after several years in SVIMS as they did before I joined. As a non-mycologist, much as I am interested in scientific descriptions and Latin names, I revel in the stories that hold mushrooms at their centre. I understand their inherent attraction.

People weren't asking because they wanted the mystery solved. They wanted to feed their fascination for the fantastic. They wanted to hear fabulous names such as Death Cap, Chicken of the Woods, Man-on-Horseback and Cauliflower Mushroom. They wanted to hear stories of mushrooms that grow out of caterpillars in Tibet to become a sought-after aphrodisiac. They were as excited as I was about slime molds that begin as single cells then band together to form a larger organism that travels the forest looking for food. And we marveled about truffles selling for huge sums to prestigious restaurants.

Mushrooms are like a connection to our fairytale past. One outgrows the faeries, the unicorns and the big bad wolf, but somehow the mushroom mystery stays alive.

I've changed my approach when I'm asked about my mushroom affiliation. I still assure people I'm not an expert, but I'm more focused on keeping the magic alive. In addition to tips on mushroom identity, I tell tales of mushrooms (and mushroomers). I talk about the seemingly unbelievable with the same sense of fascination and wonder as the people I'm telling the tales to.

In the end I encourage people to become part of this amazing world, both the scientific and the mythic. I encourage them to come to a SVIMS meeting where the real experts can provide a proper introduction to inhabitants of the fifth kingdom, complete with Latin names and mythical tales.

## THE LAST WORD

It's March already... and by the time you read this, I should be in Béziers, a small town in the south of France, where I have two whole months to indulge in all things French which, of course, includes fungi.

I've been doing my homework. Apparently, France has strict rules about picking mushrooms—where and when you can, the size of the mushroom, the obligatory use of a knife and a basket—but they also have a good system for keeping people safe. Every pharmacist is trained to identify mushrooms, so you can take your specimens to the “pharmacie” to be

checked before you cook a plate full of tasty-looking *Amanita phalloides* for your guests.

In my rambles through the countryside, I'll be keeping an eye out for “morilles” and “truffles d'hiver”, as well as the highly-rated “pholiote du peuplier” (*Agrocybe aegerita*). Better still, I'll be looking for cloth-hatted, grizzly-faced Frenchmen wandering in the woods with their eyes down and their pigs snuffling. “Champignons, messieurs?? Pour moi??” Wish me luck!

Jill Stanley

<http://trufflesandturkeytails.blogspot.com>