

# **Annual Report for 2018 of the Western Pennsylvania Mushroom Club to the North American Mycological Association**

by  
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WPMC continues to be a large active club with diverse interests, covering culinary, cultivation, art, photography, and science.

## **Membership**

WPMC had 761 members at the end of 2017 and, as of September 18 of this year, has attained 95% of that record level.

## **Button Program**

WPMC members have the opportunity to earn mushroom ID buttons which indicate the number of species they know, starting with "10 " up to " 150" mushrooms. Once a member achieves 150, they are promoted to Club Identifier and are authorized to identify mushrooms on behalf of the club. Once a member gets to about 500 species, they are eligible for election to Club Mycologist.

So far this year, WPMC has announced or awarded ten ID buttons to nine members. WPMC currently has five Mycologists, 13 Identifiers, and one Bolete Specialist. Two of the Identifiers are new this year.

## **Monthly Meetings**

WPMC meets on the third Tuesday of the month, March through November, at the Audubon Society Headquarters in Fox Chapel, PA.

Our most popular meeting of the year is our cultivation meeting. Members each get a substrate and some spawn for some interesting edible. This year we drilled shiitake logs and provided oyster mushroom kits.

Most of our speakers are club members with topics they are interested

In, but we occasionally bring in guest speakers. This year we brought in Walt Sturgeon from the Ohio Mushroom Society, who presented Edible Wood Rotters of Western Pennsylvania.

Other topics included "A year of edible mushrooms" and "The Artist Experience in the Forest: Fungi". For those with a scientific bent, we had a hands-on microscopy meeting, including the popular opportunity to buy chemical kits.

## **Walks**

We have scheduled 36 walks this year, mostly on Saturdays. Most people found some morels on our several Spring walks, and our Chanterelle Walk was also moderately productive.

We continued our experiment with winter walks, scheduling three walks during the snowy season. One walk was snowed out, but the other two were successful, turning up nearly as much diversity as we find during the warmer months. Thanks to Gary Lincoff for encouraging this experiment. We will definitely continue.

This year WPMC experimented with scheduling multiple events for the same day, given our large and diverse membership. For example, on August 18 we scheduled our Fall survey of Sycamore Island, sent representatives to Allegheny County North Park's "Garden in the Park" and held a walk at Erie Bluffs State Park. All three events were well-attended and successful. There appears to be enough interest in Western PA to support multiple events.

BioBlitzes are multi-taxon (mushrooms, birds, snails, fish, etc.) events aimed at identifying species at a location and educating the public on Natural History. We continue our involvement, providing mycology expertise for BioBlitzes at Bird Park in Mount Lebanon, PA and Phipps Conservatory in Pittsburgh, PA.

For a few years the club has been providing survey services for Western PA organizations interested in knowing about their biodiversity. We continue our twice a year (Spring and Fall) Survey of the Allegheny Land Trust Sycamore Island. We've done several one-time surveys for ALT. For a second year we helped Tom Ridge Environmental Center build their Fungarium.

## **Classes**

In keeping with our mission as an educational non-profit organization, we held multiple mushroom classes, including Mushroom Education Day on April 14 and Naturalist Training for ALT on June 9.

## **Media Coverage**

WPMC received widespread media coverage of its events, including not only listings of upcoming events, but also extensive articles. This year WPMC was featured in numerous publications:

1. Pittsburgh Quarterly: "The Secret to Finding Morels" (2018 Summer)
2. Go Erie: "Mushrooms Popping Up Everywhere" (August 1)
3. Go Erie: "Erie's Mushroom Kingdom: Exotic Mushrooms Abound" (August 5)
4. Post-Gazette.com: "Get to know your mushrooms—at ground level" (August 31)
5. Mt. Lebanon Magazine: "Mushrooms of Mt. Lebanon" (September)
6. Trib Live: "Sewickley Heights Park walk a highlight of Mushroom Club's September events" (September 7)

## **Lincoff Foray, 14-15 September 2018**

This was the first year that we held the Gary Lincoff Mid-Atlantic Mushroom Foray without Gary. He had been a dear friend to many members of our club, including your author. Among many other things, Gary convinced me of the importance of good common names. He is sorely missed.

In remembrance of Gary, this year we renamed our foray "The Gary Lincoff Memorial Foray". Next year it will be back to its regular name.

Our Guest Mycologists this year were Taylor Lockwood, Walt Sturgeon, and our own John Plischke III. Taylor's talk was "Taylor Lockwood: Greatest Hits and Latest Clips" featuring his amazing mushroom photography. Walt Sturgeon, author of multiple field guides and an experienced field mycologist, presented "Mushrooms of the Appalachians" which coincides nicely with his upcoming book, "Appalachian Mushrooms: A Field Guide." John spoke about "Edible Mushrooms and How to Prepare Them".

We identified XX species. This year we only took DNA from species we have not sampled before, so we took XX vouchers with DNA samples. This year we also switched from FTA cards to centrifuge tubes in hopes of better yields.

## **Photo Contest**

We have an ever-popular photo contest for which we grant a wide variety of prizes. This year's awards will be given out at our October

meeting.

### **WPMC Mycology Grant**

WPMC maintains a fund to offer grants for students in Western PA to run mycological projects. Applicants are invited to present a budget, and then a talk after the project is completed. Our 2017 WPMC grant recipient, Emma Honcharski, presented her work on mushroom cultivation at various not-for-profit organizations.

### **Next Year**

WPMC is co-hosting the 2019 Northeast Mycological Federation (NEMF) Foray at Lock Haven University of Pennsylvania, on August 1-4. Our co-hosts are NJMA and EPMA.

The 19<sup>th</sup> Annual Gary Lincoff Foray will be held on Saturday, September 21, at the Rose Barn in North Park.