

Western PA Mushroom Club report to NAMA 2019

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WPMC has experienced another year of vigorous growth and activity. We set records for membership, walk attendance, and meeting attendance. We continue our scientific work with the founding of a fungarium in Pittsburgh.

In Memoriam

This year we lost Dick Dougall, founding member, past president, Harry and Elsie Knighton award recipient and creator of our button program. He is greatly missed. Dick is survived by his wife Mary Ellen, a Lifetime member of the club.

We also lost John R. Plischke, founding member, past president, and winner of multiple club awards. His wife Becky, son John Plischke III, and daughter-in-law Kim Plischke have all been active WPMC members from the very beginning.

Membership

In 2018, WPMC finished the year with 794 members. As of July 15, we had 837 members. About a quarter of our members are new this year. Almost three quarters of our members are in family memberships, which is visible at our walks with many families with young children attending our walks.

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. New this year, you can earn your 150 button without becoming a Club Identifier (i.e. regular walk leader). Club Identifier Sarah Banach has taken the mantle of the button program from Dick Dougall. We have awarded a small handful of buttons so far 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 first meeting of the year 'Psychedelic Mushrooms' by Past President Richard Jacob, was a standing-room-only event, shattering previous records (the cultivation meeting).

We've had talks on tick awareness (use permethrin!), an update on our DNA work, toxicology, and our ever-popular cultivation meeting. Upcoming talks include Chickens & Hens, Lichens, our Photo Contest, and our Pot Luck Dinner.

Walks

We have more than 35 walks and other events scheduled so far and will definitely add many more walks as the year continues.

Our morel and chanterelle walks were well attended, and everybody went home with something to make for dinner. It's been a pretty good year for edibles.

We continue our practice of monthly walks through the winter and find these well-attended and productive.

Our March walk had a stunning 80 attendees—by far the largest non-foray walk we've ever had. Attendance at walks continues to be high, with 20 to 30 being typical.

We continue to partner with local organizations for walks and education, including Allegheny Land Trust (ALT), Friends of Murrysville Parks, Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy, Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, Indiana County Friends of the Parks, Woodland Owners of Clarion-Allegheny Valley, and the Westmoreland Bird & Nature Club.

We participated in BioBlitzes for ALT, and Phipps Conservatory and plan to participate in the Continental Mycoblitz on August 12-19.

We continue our surveys of Sycamore Island for ALT, with walks in April and July.

Classes

We held Mushroom Education day on May 4th, and the ALT PA Master Naturalist program on May 18th. Many of our members have also made presentations on morels, cultivation, and mushrooms in general to garden clubs and other organizations.

Media Coverage

WPMC received widespread media coverage of its events, including not only listings of upcoming events, but also extensive interviews with two of our members by Trib Live.

Lincoff Foray, 21 September 2019

We are honored to continue the Gary Lincoff Mid-Atlantic Mushroom Foray again this year. We'll have a pre-walk at Cook Forest on the 20th. New this year is a Science Day on the 22nd to provide a more relaxed environment in which to do more detailed identification work, plus DNA collection and vouchering procedures.

Our guests this year are Bill Russell, author of "Field Guide to Wild Mushrooms of Pennsylvania and the Mid-Atlantic", Rick Kerrigan, author of "Agaricus of North America", and our own Adam Haritan, founder of LearnYourLand.com.

NEMF 2019

WPMC is one of three host clubs for this year's Northeast Mycological Federation foray in Lock Haven, PA, August 1st-4th.

Photo Contest

We are accepting entries for our annual photo contest, with awards to be given at our October meeting.

Science

We continue our involvement with the North American Mycoflora Project (NAMP). We continue taking voucher specimens for DNA fingerprinting and have been consistently budgeting for fingerprinting a couple hundred collections per year.

This year we are pleased to announce a new Fungarium for Western Pennsylvania at the Carnegie Museum of Natural History (CM). WPMC is donating our collections from the 2017 and 2018 Lincoff Forays to found this new Fungarium. Bonnie Isaac, Collection Manager of Section Botany at CM is now the curator for the new Fungarium. CM is registered with NAMP as a participating fungarium willing to take collections from Western Pennsylvania.

Richard Jacob is leading a new WPMC Heavy Metals Project. We are collecting edible fungi along with soil samples to ascertain the extent of heavy metal concentration in parks around Pittsburgh. We also plan to assess some brown field sites.

WPMC Mycology Grant

WPMC maintains a fund to offer grants of up to \$1000 in Western PA to run mycological projects. Applicants are invited to present a budget, and then a talk after the project is completed. So far this year, our Scholarship Committee has awarded a grant to Carnegie Museum of Natural History to support our new fungarium.