Mushrooms I Have Found In My Yard

Article and photos by Jim Strutz

I read a book awhile ago written by a woman who spent a year observing natural phenomenon in her yard. She consulted experts on natural history, animals, insects, birds, and plants to explain her observations. I was envious that she had the idea to write this book, I wish I had done it. However, I noticed that fungi were hardly mentioned in her book. I recognized the opportunity to borrow from her idea and write about some of my own observations of fungi in my yard.

My yard was carved out of a hillside above Carnegie nearly 100 years ago. Below the few inches of topsoil are heavy clay, shale, and sandstone typical of western Pennsylvania. There is some dead wood, some grass, some mulch, but not a lot of moisture since it is on top of a hill.

I first noticed fungi in my yard around the third or forth year I lived there. I had a huge oak tree next to my house removed leaving the stump in its place. Soon afterwards I noticed a large orange growth on the side of the stump. I had no clue what it was other than some kind of fungus. Now I know it was a Chicken-of-the-Woods (Laetiporus sulphureus), a delectable edible. I couldn’t help but admire such a magnificent mushroom.

Laetiporus is a primary decomposer. Its thin, stringy mycelium weaves its way through woody fibers as enzymes begin to break down dead wood into its organic components. It fruits when the conditions are right producing the fleshy orange mass that we call Chicken-of-the-Woods.

One might guess there are secondary decomposers since there are primary decomposers. Secondary decomposers are typically found on mulch instead of wood. Two such secondary decomposers are Wine Cap Stropharia (Stropharia rugosoannulata) and Blewits (Clitocybe nuda), both of which I have found in my yard. In the case of the Wine Caps I purchased sawdust...
President’s Corner
“Have Fun Mushrooming”
By Dick Dougall

I was leading a group of three ladies as part of a recent mushroom walk in North Park. They were beginning mushroomers, but they were far from beginners in other aspects of nature. They knew more about birds, plants, and trees than I did. When I asked them if they knew about Newcomb’s Wildflower Guide, they agreed with me that it was a great book, and each had their own copy. I was able to teach them about the common mushrooms we found while they taught me about the plants we saw. Other groups on the walk found more interesting mushrooms including a nice Cauliflower Mushroom, Sparassis crispa, and two spectacularly blood-red Frost’s Boletes, Boletus frostii. It was a pleasant morning.

With fall coming, plan to try some of our walks. You can find the dates and locations in this newsletter and on our website. It’s a great time of year to find new mushrooms. Honey mushrooms, Armillaria mellea, and Blewits, Clitocybe nuda, are two good edibles that can be found in large quantities after a good rain. Mushroom hunting with a group really results in more species being found. Someone will find a mushroom. When the group comes over to look, they often find many other mushrooms appearing magically at their feet. Then the fun begins trying to identify what was found.

Sometimes we can only guess at the identity of some of the mushrooms. We will not always be correct in our IDs which is not critical if we don’t intend to eat questionable mushrooms. (Remember, “when in doubt, throw it out applies” to edibles.) We can even teach each other good naturally when a mistake is discovered. At the North Park walk discussed in the first paragraph, the group caught one of my mistakes. We found something that I thought was Dead Man’s Fingers, Xylaria polymorpha, in its early stage of growth, because it was very white. Much to my embarrassment, some more knowledgeable people on the walk pointed out that this specimen was very immature Indian Pipes! I now know better getting another close look at the specimen. Don’t be afraid to guess the identity of something. You may be wrong, but that is one of the best ways to learn.

Another thing that some of us do on walks is word play with Latin names. Some sound pleasantly amusing to my ear like Clavicipita pyxidata. No, it is not a cigar, but is a mushroom we all should recognize. Look it up in your Lincoff Field Guide.

Some of us, including my grandson, have tried giving humorous Latin names to common trash items found in the woods. We call these Pseudomycetes, i.e. “Fake Mushrooms.” In a future issue of our newsletter, we will give a quiz of some of the better names to see how many you can guess.

As the title of this article says; have fun with your mushrooming and fellow mushroomers.

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2007 Photo Contest
Please consider entering the club's photo contest. Deadline for entries is October 1st. You can enter three types of photos: digital images, slides, and color prints. You can enter images in the following three categories:

- **Pictorial**—a beautiful mushroom in its natural setting.
- **Documentary**—mushrooms emphasizing features needed for identification.
- **Judge's Option**—anything else related to mushrooming or the club, i.e., people, creative mushroom poses, cooked mushroom dishes, etc.

You can enter a maximum of 9 images in any combination of formats or categories. Check the Photo Contest section on our website (www.wpamushroomclub.org) for full details. Send your entries to Rebecca Miller, RR4, Box 237E, Kittanning, PA 16201 or via e-mail to rmiller@sylvaninc.com.

WPMC Mushroom Items For Sale
A number of mushroom-related items are sold at our meetings: caps and t-shirts, mushroom cookbooks, loupes, waxpaper bags, and Field Guides to Mushrooms (both Lincoln's and Russell's). See Mary Ellen Dougall at the sales table at our meetings.

WPMC Yahoo Groups
Yahoo Groups is a great resource for our club members and other mushroom enthusiasts from across the country. There are always interesting discussions in the 'Message' section on all kinds of subjects involving wild mushrooms. Find out what mushrooms are up, where people are finding them, recipes, weather, latest announcements, and everything else. Also find award winning photos in the 'Photo' section, and articles, lists, and other files in the 'Files' section. For more information, http://groups.yahoo.com/group/wpamushroomclub/

WPMC Website
Yet another great resource to club members is our professionally designed website. There you will find information and links pertaining to our club, including our famed walk/oray species lists and Java data miner. Don't forget to read Joe Luzanski's Blog "On The Stump" while you're there. Please see our website www.wpamushroomclub.org for more information.

WPMC Wild Mushroom Cookbook, Volume 3
We are working on compiling WPMC Cookbook, Volume 3, but we need more recipes. We are waiting for you to join us! Volumes 1 and 2 have been great successes and are both available for sale. We cannot use copyrighted material or anything you have not tested and enjoyed. Send your recipes to Becky Plischke at moreibpg@aol.com or mail to 129 Grant St., Greensburg, PA 15601.

Monthly Meetings
Our meetings are held on the third Tuesday of every month from March until November. They begin at 7:00pm at Beechwood Nature Reserve in Dorseyville. Please see their website (www.awsp.org) for directions and other information.

September 18th: "Cooking with Mushrooms" Cooking with wild mushroom is a topic of interest to many people. The variety of mushrooms possible and the number of recipes are both large. Come to this meeting and get some answers to your mushroom cooking questions.

October 16th: Election of Officers & Open Forum Officers for next year will be elected. Club members will be encouraged to share mushroom stories, experiences and slides. Results of the club's photography contest will also be presented.

November 20th: "Lichens and Fungi" Speaker to be determined. Most of us know a lichen when we see it on a tree or rock. But the real question is what type of organism are they. As it turns out, they are a symbiosis of two other organisms that are living together. The two organisms are algae and fungi. This combination can live in some of the most inhospitable places on our planet. They are also one of the longest living organisms on our world. Some have been growing in the same location for hundreds of years! Come to our meeting and hear more about these fascinating organisms.

Walks & Forays
Walks and forays are held almost every weekend from April through October. They are led by a walk leader and an identifier. Each walk will be at a designated location where participants will forage for wild mushrooms of all species. After the walk the identifier will discuss the mushrooms that were found and answer any questions. Walks usually last 2 or 3 hours and participants are welcome to stay longer if they want. It's a great way to learn about wild mushrooms. Please see our website www.wpamushroomclub.org for more information and links pertaining to our club, including our famed walk/oray species lists and Java data miner. Don't forget to read Joe Luzanski's Blog "On The Stump" while you're there. Please see our website www.wpamushroomclub.org for more information.

We request that no one hunts a walk or foray location for at least two weeks prior to a walk or foray. It is only through your cooperation that we can have successful walks and forays. All walks and forays will be held rain or shine. All walks start on time.

August 25 - 11:00 am Brady's Run Park, Beaver County. Meet John Plischke and John Plischke III for a program and walk. Head on the Parkway West out of Pittsburgh toward the Airport/Route 60. Pass the Airport on Route 60 and continue on to the Chippewa exit. It is the last exit before 60 becomes a toll road. When you exit at Chippewa, make a Right at the light onto Route 51, south. Continue on Route 51 (about 2 miles) until you come to the red light in front of the entrance to Brady's Run Park. Make a right into the park. About 1 mile down the road (near the lake and beach) you will see a turn up the hill to your right and a sign that says "Ed Calland Arboretum". Turn here and follow the road all the way to the top, you will see a parking area and the pavilion.

September 1st - 10:00-12:00 Harrison Hills Park, Allegheny County. Meet Joyce and George Gross. Pick up PA Route 28 towards Natrona Heights (Allegheny Co. Belt System [red, green, yellow or blue]), PA Route 910, Route 356, PA Turnpike [Exit 5 - Allegheny Valley], or Interstate 270-Route 422. Get off Rt. 28 at Exit 16 (Millerstown-Freeport) and turn right if you've been traveling northbound, or left if traveling southbound, onto Route 908 for approximately 0.8 mile. You will come to a flashing red light at an intersection of a four-lane highway. Turn right (Freeport Rd.) and get into the left-hand lane. The entrance to Harrison Hills Park is 0.8 miles on the left, just beyond the Harrison Hills Fire Dept. (large, single story buff building) and Harrison Hills Chiropractic on the right.
September 8 - 10:00 -12:00: South Park, Allegheny County. Meet LaMonte Yarroll Brownsville Rd & Corrigan Dr, http://www.county.allegheny.pa.us/parks/facility.asp. Take Route 51 South. Turn right onto Fairhaven Road/Provoist road. Provoist Road becomes Brownsville Road. Continue to the Park. Meet at the Nature Center. We will drive to the walk location in the park.

Sept 15*: Gary Lincoff Mid-Atlantic Mushroom Foray Don’t miss it! Register today! See the registration form in this newsletter.

September 21-23: The 2007 Charles Horton Peck Annual New York State Mushroom Foray will be held in Pennsylvania (1) at the Sieg Conference Center at Lock Haven University of Pennsylvania. If you’re interested, submit your email to the host, Barrie Overton <boverton@lhup.edu> to receive Peck updates and registration forms. The Peck Foray is open to all who are interested in fungi.

September 22 - 10:00-12:00: Jennings Environmental Educational Center, Slippery Rock. Meet Ron Dolan and Becky Lubold Take I-79 north to Exit 96. Turn right onto PA 488 East. Portersville Road. Make a slight left onto Pleasant Valley Road. Merge onto US-422 east. Take the PA-528 exit toward Prospect. Turn left onto PA-528 North Franklin Street. Continue for about 7.5 miles.

September 23 - 10:00 AM - 4:00 PM Join the New Jersey Mycological Association for their FUNGUS FEST. NJMA’s biggest mushroom event of the year. It will again be held at Frelinghuyzen Arboretum at 53 East Hanover Avenue in Morristown. They promise lots of fungus fun and mushroom identification, exhibits and talks, guided walks, cooking demonstrations, cultivation, arts and crafts and a whole lot more.

September 28-30: Meet the Mycological Association of Washington at Camp Sequanota in Jennerstown, Somerset County, which is where they’ve had excellent foray weekends two since 1988. The record number of species there was about 260, and sometimes found vast quantities of choice edibles, as well prettily good amounts like black chanterelles, horse mushrooms, and Boletus separans. Details at www.mawdc.org

September 29-30: Join the Ohio Mushroom Society for their Fall Foray in the Deep Woods, Hocking Co. See their website for more information: http://www.ohiomushroom.org

September 28-30: Join the Eastern Penn Mushrooms for the Helen Miknis Memorial Foray. This year’s annual EPM foray will be held at King’s Gap Environmental and Training Center near Carlisle. PA. Dorothy Smullen from the New Jersey Mycological Association has agreed to be the mycologist and identifier. Contact John Dawson at jw7@psu.edu or see http://www.epennmushroomers.org/Summer%2007.html for more information.

October 13 - 11:00 am until 2:00 pm: Cook Forest State Park, Clarion County. Meet Jim Strutz in the parking lot next to the “Cathedral” area of the park. The walk will center in the Tom’s Run area. I’ll continue on my own after 2:00pm and into the next day in Cook Forest, Clear Creek State Park, perhaps in a few places in Allegheny National Forest and in State Game Lands depending on how much time I feel like taking. I made camping reservations for myself at Ride Campground, site 31. There are other available sites nearby. Mushroom hunting will be done by foot, by bike, and by car. Some places may be hilly. Anyone is welcome to join me on any or all of this “unofficial” part of the excursion. Make a day or a weekend of it. Cook’s Forest is one of the premier mushroom spots in western PA with a wide variety of species found there. http://www.allegheny-online.com

DIRECTIONS to North Park
From Pittsburgh go north on Rt 8. Turn left off Wildwood Road onto the Yellow Belt (Ford Dealer and Boston Market on the right). Go 1.3 mi. to a red light; go straight (W Hardies). Continue another 1.6 mi. to a red light at North Park Entrance. Road name changes to Ingomar Road at this intersection. Turn left on Babcock Blvd. Follow the signs to the Swimming Pool parking lot and find the car with a yellow ribbon on the antenna. www.county.allegheny.pa.us/parks/parkphon.asp

Mushroom walks begin promptly at the designated time and place. Your walk leader will brief you on walk details and when to return. The walk identifier, at the end of the walk, will name and discuss the mushrooms found, and answer any questions. You are responsible for bringing your own lunch, water, mushroom gathering paraphernalia, camera, notebook, compass, whistle, etc. Dress for the weather and for comfort. Most importantly, identify any mushroom you intend to eat very carefully. We are not responsible for the consequences of you eating the wrong mushroom.

My Yard, continued from page 2

various tiny grass mushrooms in my yard. I’ve also seen a few slimes and molds. Hmm. I remember taking several of my books to sell at a used book store. The clerk there told me they couldn’t take some of them because there were a few mold spots, and mold was “contagious” and could spread to other books. Basements are common places for mold to develop as moisture seeps through cement walls and floors, particularly in high humidity. I have actually seen cup fungi fruiting in some people’s basements and garages (not mine!).

A tiny Japanese Umbrella Lily (Coprinus picatus) in the grass.

You don’t have to go far to find mushrooms. Take some time to look around your yard for fungi, identify them, take some pictures, and log the information in a book. It’s a fun way to learn about fungi and to get to know your surroundings.
Lepiota

Article and photos by John Plischke III

The ring can be carefully rolled up and down the stalk without breaking it. The scales are difficult to rub off. Extreme Caution must be used.

Parasol Mushroom (Lepiota procera), (Macrolepiota procera), (Leucoagaricus procerus)

Other Common Names: Parasol Mushroom

Family: Agaricaceae

Description: 5 to 16 inches tall; Flesh: White, does not stain reddish when injured; Cap: From 2 ½ to 11 inches wide and ¾ to 1 inches thick. It emerges from the ground looking like half of an egg, later becoming convex, ultimately becoming almost flat. It can look like an umbrella with age. The cap can be removed from the stalk without breaking or tearing the stalk or cap, akin to pulling an arm out of a socket. There is a nipple-like part on the very center of the cap called an umbo that does not have scales and feels smooth and is darker in color. The cap is white to cream colored and has scales ranging in color from tan to beige to brown-red. It often has white cracks or is white between the scales, or may be fairly even in color. The scales are not easily rubbed off or removed from the cap since they are part of it; Gill: not attached to the stalk, while becoming cream colored with age, from 5/8 to 3/4 inch deep; Spore Print: White; Stalk: 4 to 15 inches tall and ¾ to 5/8 inches wide. Many people think that it has a snakeskin like pattern on its stalk. Usually this pattern is below the ring and it is smooth, without scales, and often lighter in color above the ring. The stalk has a round bulge at its base. It also has a thick double edge ring like the sides of a quarter rather than single like the sides of a sheet of paper. Ring edges are rough. It can have white string like mycelium, attached to it if it is pulled out of loose rotting leaves. It is similar in color to the cap & hollow.

Range: Eastern and central North America & Europe.

Where To Look: On the soil in lawns, pastures, mixed woods, and in wooded parks that have grass under the trees. They like oak and cherry trees. I have found them in the same spot for a good number of years. They usually are the most common and largest in size at wood edges in parks where they blow or dump the leaves. The rich rotting leaves can make the caps get as big as a dinner plate.

How Often They're Found: Occasional to common.

How They're Grouped: They are usually in groups or scattered but can grow singly and sometimes grow in fairy rings.

Social Plants: I have seen clover, broadleaf plantain, wild carrot, and dandelion, in with the grass but there can be no social plants when growing in the woods.

When To Look: July to October in the north and the season starts later & ends in December in the south.

Look-alikes: The poisonous Green Spored Lepiota (Chlorophyllum molybdites) has a green spore print, white gills that can turn green. The edible Reddening Lepiota (Lepiota americana), which bruises reddish. The edible and typically smaller Shaggy Parasol (Lepiota rhachodes), which has a stalk the snake like pattern of scales and its flesh turns reddish brown when bruised and its cap has much larger scales. The edible and choice (Leiota gracillenta) spores are 10X 13 long instead of 15-20. The edible (Lepiota acutesquamosa) (Amanita sp.) many of which are poisonous also share free gills and white spores but its cap warts typically rub off easily, the ring on their stalks typically break when rolled up and down the stalk.

Edibility: Edible and Choice with extreme caution.

Cooking Instructions: I snap off the stems from the cap because they are very fibrous and only eat the caps. The cap is excellent fried in butter and has a flavor that is better than Morels! The cap can be breaded and fried. When fresh dried out mushrooms are found in the woods I often save them for later use. The younger mushrooms that do not have expanded caps are excellent stuffed. This is one of my very favorite mushrooms.

Macrochemical Reactions: The spores turn reddish brown in Meltzer's.

The caps were dipped in eggs and flour and fried in butter. Yum!
Shaggy Parasol (Lepiota rachodes), (Leucocrinus rachodes), (Macrolepiota rachodes), (Macrolepiota rhacodes)

Other Common Names: Shaggy Parasol

Family: Agaricaceae

Description: Flesh: is ¼ to 7/8 inch, color is white but bruises red to red-brown when young but once dried out the bruising may not occur; Cap: 2 to 8 inches wide and looks almost like an egg when young, becoming convex as it opens, then becomes almost flat with age as the expansion causes cracks and scales. It has brown to brown-red scales that can also have some tan or pink in them. The center of the cap can be darker colored and typically does not expand and break into the scales. The very center is not cracked and is much smoother than the rest of the cap. It is white between the cracks and scales. The skin can often be peeled back to the knob or nipple in the center of the cap. The ring is still attached to the cap on young unopened specimens; Gills: free and not attached to the stalk, color is white becoming slightly darker with age and can bruise red-brown, closely spaced, can be up to 7/16 inch deep; Spore Print: white; Stalk: 2-1/8 to 6-1/2 inches tall and 3/8 to 7/8 inches wide, wider near the base which can be bulb like, color is white but it turns red-brown to orange-brown when bruised or cut, bruising occurs almost right away except in older specimens, can develop some gray. The stalk often becomes red-brown below the ring with age. It also has a thick double edge ring like the sides of a quarter rather than single like the sides of a sheet of paper. Ring edges are rough and more so than the sides of a quarter. The white ring which can also bruise can stick out from 3/16 to 7/16 inch. The mycelium is white.

Range: United States.

Where To Look: Typically on the soil under spruce and blue spruce where it can be growing on the soil up through or in the needles. They also can grow in wood chips, and leaf litter but I usually find it under spruce. It has been reported in gardens.

How Often It Is Found: It is common.

How They’re Grouped: Singly to in large groups and clusters or scattered.

Social Plants: Occasionally grass can be present.

When To Look: September to November in most locations, California starting when other parts of the countries seasons end lasting until February.

Look-aikes: The poisonous Green Spored Lepiota (Chlorophyllum molybdites) has a green spore print and white gills that can turn green. The edible Reddening Lepiota (Lepiota americana) which typically grows in wood chips bruises reddish. The edible Parasol Mushroom (Lepiota proceras) which is often taller. (Lepiota prominens) which is much lighter in color and spores 9X10 long. (Macrolepiota venenata) grows in California. Some poisonous (Amanita sp.) many of which are poisonous also share free gills and white spores but its cap warts typically rub off easily, and their ring typically does not roll up and down the stalk without breaking.

Edibility: Edible and good with extreme caution. Some west coast collections can make you sick.

Cooking Instructions: The stems are woody and I like to snap the caps off leaving the stalks behind. The cap is excellent fried in butter or it can be breaded and fried. When fresh dried out mushrooms are found in the woods I often save them for later use. They are good in gravies, and keep well once dried.

Macroscopic Features: The spores are dextrinoid.

Sausage Stuffed Shaggy Parasol

My wife likes to stuff the caps with loose sausage and bake them in the oven in square flat bottom pan. Then she sprinkles a little cheese on them.

CAUTION

There are many poisonous species of Lepiota mushrooms, some of which can cause death, and there are deadly poisonous look-aikes that make them a mushroom for more experienced collectors.
THE SIXTH ANNUAL
GARY LINCOFF
MID-ATLANTIC MUSHROOM FORAY
SATURDAY, SEPT. 15, 2007
7:30-8:15 Registration, 8:30-7:30 Program

SPECIAL EARLY REGISTRATION FORM FOR CLUB MEMBERS ONLY

Featured speaker will be Gary Lincoff, author of the Audubon Society Field Guide to North American Mushrooms. Gary is the nation's best know mushroom expert. He is past president of the North American Mycological Association (NAMA).

Join us for an exciting day of fungi, fun, and friends and mushroom exploration. We will hunt and field-identify mushrooms. Gary Lincoff will give a slide show, talk and autograph his book. We will taste mushroom cooking.

Special guest mycologist, Renee Lebeuf, is one of Canada's premier mycologists and a mushroom photographer. She identifies and does one day forays for the Cercle des mycologues de Montréal (CMM), the largest mushroom club in the Americas.

Special guest mycologist, Bill Russell, recently published, "Mushrooms of Pennsylvania and the Mid Atlantic." Bill has been studying and teaching about mushrooms for over fifty years. Get him to autograph your book.

Special guest mycologist, Dave Miller, just retired from teaching biology and mycology at Oberlin College in Ohio. He will be giving a program geared to the beginning mushroomer.

A host of other mycologists will be on hand to help you learn mushrooms, including: Fred Schrock, John Plischke III, Robert Boice, Kim Plischke, and La Monte Yarroll.

FUNGI FUN FRIENDS

Cost is only $50 at the door or only $25* each pre-registered and paid by September 1, (*does not include club membership). Children 11 & under free. Registration is limited. Send your registration in today!

Contact Glenn Carr 412-369-0495 gbrown2carrs@cs.com

Signing and dating the release is an absolute requirement for attendance. No refunds
Make check payable to: Western PA Mushroom Club, 1848 Fairhill Road, Allison Park, PA 15101

Name 1

Name 2

Name 3

Address ________________________________ City/State/Zip ___________________*

Phone ________________________________ E-mail ________________________________

RELEASE

Knowing the risks, I (we) agree to assume the risks, and agree to release, hold harmless, and to indemnify the Western Pennsylvania Mushroom Club, and any officer or member thereof, from any and all legal responsibility for injuries or accidents incurred by myself or my family during or as a result of any mushroom identification, field trip, excursion, meeting or dining, sponsored by the club.

Signature ________________________________ Date __________________

Signature ________________________________ Date __________________
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