

nyms



Winter 2006 New York Mycological Society Newsletter

Greetings!

I am excited to bring you my first issue as editor of the New York Mycological Society newsletter. I hope that you are entering 2006 warm and happy and that you haven't worn out your hiking shoes during the transit strike.

The newsletter has a little staff now, in that I (Pam Kray) am the editor, Maria Reidelbach is our graphic designer, and Paul Sadowski is our publisher. We have some ideas for changing styles and welcome any comments you might have for the look of the newsletter. Thank you to Helen Thomas-Williams for her dedication as editor up to now.

The winter lecture series is under way. Gary Lincoff will give the first lecture on Sunday, January 8, 2006, at 1 PM in the Linder Theater at the American Museum of Natural History (see right). The NYMS business meeting will take place on February 12. Mark it on your calendar, come to the meeting to discuss club business and vote on officers.

In upcoming newsletters I'll include dates, details and applications for the many forays that NYMS members participate in, including our own morel breakfast and chanterelle weekend. (Remember to send in your dues by April 1 to be able to attend the morel breakfast.) Taking part in more remote forays with other clubs is sometimes spectacular in both the finds and the atmosphere. If you haven't done any before, think about going to the NEMF (North East Mycological Federation) foray that will take place in Lac Bouchette, Quebec, Canada, in September. You can find more information at <http://www.nemf.org>. The NEMF website is full of information, including collecting guidelines, directions for photographing mushrooms and for mushroom dyeing, and Gary Lincoff pages. Check it out.

Please remember to send in articles, *recipes* and pictures for the newsletter. Please email or call me about picture resolution or with any questions: pamkray@mindspring.com or 212-254-4104. Any special interest articles, such as people's experience with using mushrooms for dyeing, mushroom cultivation and seasonal information are also heartily welcome. Send all submissions to Pam Kray, 633 E. 11th St., Apt. 2, New York, NY 10009, or, again, email to: pamkray@mindspring.com.

Cheers! Happy New Year! And Happy Mushrooming in 2006!

Pam Kray

≡ *Inside This Issue* ≡

NYMS Year in Review by Dennis Aita highlights the weather and the surprise finds.

Name That Mushroom for Henry David Thoreau. He was stumped.

Mushroom Harvest: A macabre news piece about forest suicides in Japan.

Japan also gives a tradition of art about life, sex and death. We have a mushroom-related example and translation.

Plus, a couple of Japanese recipes using mushrooms available this time of year.

✦ *Upcoming Events* ✦

NYMS Winter Lecture Series

The American Museum of Natural History in the Linder Theater. The closest entrance is on 79th Street but you can enter at any door. Inform the guard that you are there for the New York Mycological Society meeting for free admission.

Sunday, January 8, 1:00 PM
Gary Lincoff, presenter.
Topic: Something to get the new year rolling.

Sunday, February 12, 1:00 PM
Annual business meeting

Sunday, March 12, 1:00 PM
Speakers to be announced

Sunday, April 9, 1:00 PM
Speakers to be announced



NYMS Newsletter

Editor—Pam Kray
Graphic design—Maria Reidelbach
Printing and mailing—Paul Sadowski

A quarterly publication of the New York Mycological Society, distributed to its members.

President—Maggie Vall
Vice President—Dennis Aita
Secretary—Paul Sadowski
Treasurer—Alice Barner
Walks Coordinator—Dennis Aita
Lecture Coordinator—Gary Lincoff
Study Group—Paul Sadowski
Archivist—Ralph Cox
Webmaster—Julie Falsetti

<http://mysite.verizon.net/nycmycology>

Articles should be sent to:
Pam Kray
633 E. 11 Street, #2
New York, NY 10009
pamkray@mindspring.com

Membership inquiries:
Alice Barner
220 E. 73 St., #10A
New York, NY 10021
abarner@rcn.com

Address corrections:
Paul Sadowski
205 E. 94 St., #9
New York, NY 10128-3780
pabloski@earthlink.net

2005: The Mycological Year in Review

Summer Drought & Autumn Surprises

By Dennis Aita

2005 was unseasonably chilly and rainy from late winter into early spring in the New York City region. The spring blossoms and early spring mushrooms were about two weeks late—one of the latest beginnings of springtime flora that I can remember. Morel hunters had great expectations...waiting impatiently for it to get warmer. But, while we waited, the weather gods thought otherwise—the early spring rains and showers practically stopped in most of our region. It turned out to be a very short and not wonderful morel season, especially to the north where the soil quickly dried out in many places. However, starting on the 20th of May, our entire area experienced significant rains and the temperatures really dropped. Curiosity forced me once again to visit some upstate morel areas for a late-season look but to no avail. I have gone to upstate New York several times after similar weather situations: a very dry, warm late April and early May followed by significant rains and considerably cooler temperatures. It does appear that once the soil has warmed up to a certain point, it doesn't matter how much rain and perfect cool temperatures we get, the morel mycelium shuts off its fruiting stage.

Late spring rains continued into June, and a small group of club members took part in the mid-June BioBlitz survey of a section of the Bronx along the Bronx River. Some chicken mushrooms were up and so were enough springtime mushrooms to make it an interesting day. In wood chips (I was told they are locally produced), we found some blue-staining *Psilocybes* that key out in Guzman's monograph to *P. subaeruginascens*, which happens to be recorded only from temperate Japan and subtropical Indonesia! I now think it quite likely that this fungus hitchhiked from Asia with other imports to the New York Botanical Gardens (just "next door") and spread to the Bronx River habitat. Closely related *Psilocybes* growing in similar habitats from the West Coast have been found in the New York City region. They include *P. cyane-scens*, which occasionally pops up in the NYBG and in Long Island and also *P. baeocystis*, which has been found in a few arboretums. [Editor's note: for a more detailed description of the BioBlitz finds, see NYMS Newsletter Summer 2005, and at <http://www.nemf.org>, see the Northeast area checklists.]

Smooth chanterelles (*Cantharellus lateritius*) are one of the first major summer mushrooms—certainly for pothunters. And they were definitely up by the end of June and early July, as were the *Lactarius hygrophoroides*. In one area of central New Jersey I found lots of young chanterelles, but, surprisingly, some were already old and starting to dry out! This tells me that they started to come up quite early in June and then dried out before the later June rains brought up fresher batches. (These smooth chanterelles can often grow quite slowly and do not decompose as easily as do the boletes. It is important to understand that old smooth chanterelles—small or large—that have lost their bright yellow-orange color and are pallid in color get tough and taste bitter or peppery.) All reports from central and northern New Jersey indicate a very good early harvest of these chanterelles. Collectors were surprised at how free of insect larvae they were (quite possibly because the early summer weather was pleasant—not hot—and without heavy rains). But mushroomers who usually collect smooth chanterelles further north in parts of upstate New York

cont. p. 3

Name That Mushroom

By Gary Lincoff

Can you help Henry David Thoreau identify his mushrooms? He knew his plants and birds but he didn't know his mushrooms. Of course he didn't have the *Audubon Society Field Guide to North American Mushrooms*, but, perhaps, you can help him here.

Journal: June 18, 1853

4 AM: As I was going up the hill, I was surprised to see rising above the June-grass, near a walnut, a whitish object, like a stone with a white top, or a skunk erect, for it was black below. It was an enormous toadstool, or fungus, a sharply conical parasol in the form of a sugar loaf, slightly turned up at the edges, which were rent half an inch in every inch or two. The whole height was sixteen inches. The pileus or cap was six inches long by seven in width at the rim, though it appeared longer than wide. There was no veil, and the stem was about one inch in diameter and naked. The top of the cap was quite white within and without, hoariest at the top of the cone like a mountain-top, not smooth but with a stringy kind of scales turned upward at the edge, which declined downward...As you looked up within, the light was transmitted between the trembling gills. It looked much like an old felt hat that is pushed up into a cone and its rims all ragged and with some meal shaken on it; in fact, it was almost big enough for a child's head. It was so delicate and fragile that its whole cap trembled on the least touch, and, as I could not lay it down without injuring it, I was obliged to carry it home all the way in my hand and erect, while I paddled my boat with one hand. It was a wonder how its soft cone ever broke through the earth...It suggests a vegetative force which may almost make man tremble for his dominion.

I have just been out (7:30 AM) to show my fungus. The milkman and the butcher followed me to inquire what it was, and children and young ladies addressed me in the street who never spoke to me before. It is so fragile that I was obliged to walk at a funereal pace for fear of jarring it. It is rapidly curling up on the edge, and the rents increasing, until it is completely fringed, and is an inch wider there. It is melting in the sun and light, and black drops and streams falling on my hand and fragments of the black fringed rim falling on the sidewalk. Evidently such a plant can only be seen in perfection in the early morning. It is a creature of the night, like the great moths. They wish me to send it to the first of a series of exhibitions of flowers and fruits to be held at the court-house this afternoon...Think of placing this giant parasol fungus in the midst of all their roses; yet they admit that it would overshadow and eclipse them all...

* * * * *

Aita, cont. from p. 2

(Rockland, Orange, and Ulster) found the ground to be getting dry by mid to late July, the pickings slim, and the beginnings of the summer drought.

In the same central New Jersey area, not a lot of species were up besides the smooth chanterelles (no black trumpets, for example) in mid-July, so I was surprised to find a substantial amount (the most that I have ever seen) of choice summer boletes—*Boletus varipes* and *Boletus* (aka *Xanthoconium*) separans growing in moist oak woods... and so early in the season.

Also in mid-July, in another part of central New Jersey around Jamesburg just

cont. p. 6

Remember!

January is here and it's time to renew your membership!

The dues structure has changed. Dues for new members are \$20. Membership renewals are \$15 for individuals and \$25 for families between now and April 1. After April 1 dues are \$20 for individuals and \$30 for families. Fill out the coupon on the back page of this newsletter and send your dues as soon as possible to Alice Barner, Treasurer. See the coupon for Alice's address.

Below is a vintage cover from *The Funny Paper*, a magazine published by the outrageous Meiji-era wit Gaikotsu Miyatake. The text reads, in part, “Teacher of botanical studies,” and “toxic fungus.”



Below, a few contemporary Japanese cartoon characters from the form of anthropomorphic mushrooms. One of them even smokes a tiny cigarette!
© Q-lia Planning & Design



√(4)√



Recipe Exchange



Braised Shiitake Mushrooms

Hoshi-Shiitake no Iri-Ni

Adapted from *Good Food from a Japanese Temple*, by Soei Yoneda

4 servings

- 1 tsp vegetable oil
- 12 medium dried shiitakes, reconstituted in tepid water and stems cut off
- 1 Tbsp sake
- 1 Tbsp soy sauce

Place oil in a small sauté pan over medium heat. Add mushrooms and sauté on both sides for a total of 3 minutes. Add sake and soy sauce and stir-fry 15 seconds on each side. Serve hot or at room temperature.

All-Mushroom Egg Custard

Kinokozukushi Chawanmushi

Adapted from *The Japanese Kitchen* by Hiroko Shimbo

4 servings

- ¼ cup tightly packed dried porcini mushrooms, reconstituted in hot water
- 4 medium fresh shiitake mushrooms, stems removed
- 5 or 6 button mushrooms, stems removed
- 1 cup enokitake mushrooms, stem ends removed
- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil
- 2 teaspoons mirin (sweet cooking wine)
- ¼ to ½ teaspoon shoyu (soy sauce), to taste
- Fresh-ground black pepper
- 2 tablespoons minced parsley
- 1 cup concentrated chicken broth
- 3 large eggs
- Salt to taste

Place a bamboo or metal steamer basket over plenty of water in a deep pot over high heat. Drain the porcini mushrooms in a fine sieve, reserving the soaking liquid. Dice all the mushrooms finely.

In a medium skillet over high heat, heat the vegetable oil then add the mushrooms. Cook for 1 minute, stirring. Add the mirin and shoyu, and cook for another minute, stirring. Add pepper and minced parsley, and give several big stirs. Remove the skillet from the heat.

Add porcini water and tap water to the chicken broth to make 2 cups. In a medium bowl, beat the eggs lightly and add them to the chicken broth. Strain through a fine sieve. Add the mushrooms and season the mixture with salt.

Fill custard cups or ramekins 80% full with the mixture. Transfer the cups to the hot steamer. If using a metal steamer, cover the underside of the lid with a thick cotton cloth to prevent condensed steam from dripping on the custard. Steam 2 minutes over high heat, and then reduce the heat to medium-low for 13 minutes, or until clear liquid runs out when you insert a wooden skewer.

The Mushroom Harvest

I was looking through some internet news wires to see if there were any interesting mushroom items. I came upon this and just had to share it. Gary wrote back with the most appreciative response and it seems that, even though Halloween and the season dedicated to this part of the cycle have passed, this article bares yet another facet of the whole.

—Pam Kray, Ed.

“Prefecture Cancels Annual Body Hunt in Suicide Forest”

by Tom Clifford, Assistant Editor, International

Reprinted from *Gulf News*, August 13, 2005

They will not search this year nor publicise what they might stumble across in Japan’s killing fields. For decades an area of outstanding natural beauty located at the foot of Mount Fuji has drawn people to admire and relish its scenery but for some it is their last journey. For the past 30 years, annual searches for bodies of suicide victims have taken place at the end of summer. These search parties were made up of about 350 firemen, police and volunteers who would retrieve up to 70 bodies annually.

But now officials in Yamanashi prefecture have stopped the searches. Authorities believe a deadly cycle is at play. The publicity the search brought led to more people going to Aokigahara Sea of Trees to end their lives. But the local tourist association wants the searches to continue as they fear potential visitors will be put off by the possibility of coming across rotting corpses.

The dense forest is a refuge from urbanised Japan and is one of the last virgin forests in the country. Its location at the foot of Mount Fuji gives it a religious and cultural significance which makes it a perfect site for those intent on self-sacrifice.

Wild mushrooms grow in abundance, which is why police referred to the grim task of retrieving bodies

as “the mushroom harvest”.

In a macabre twist, some hikers admit going there with camcorders for the “thrill factor” of finding bodies, making it the perfect Blair Witch-type weekend ramble. The search has been conducted since 1971 but with the economic downturn currently hitting the country, the deadly harvest has never been more bountiful. A decade ago the numbers surged

from roughly 20 a year to 40 and last year the body count reached more than 70.

The forest has been a place of death for centuries. In times of famine and political upheaval mothers would bring babies they could not feed there and kill them before committing suicide. Locals also believe the suicides are a response to spirits beckoning the living to come join them.



Long Live the Forest Suicides of Japan

by Gary Lincoff

What a *beautiful* story!!! I love it.

There is a mushroom known to the Japanese, who have studied it, and it is in the *Audubon Guide*! It is a Hebeloma, and one we have in the US is called Hebeloma syriense. It is attracted to nitrogen-based waste products, like home sites of small mammals, places where they excrete their waste. And it is found near decomposing bodies in soil.

Chemistry will out, as Sherlock Holmes would no doubt agree, and these species of Hebeloma are nitrogen seekers. Whether the bodies they encounter are mice or men is irrelevant. They just need nitrogen waste products and any body that works for them is a good deal.

Perhaps the Japanese suicides are growing mushrooms in their own inimitable way. To what extent the forest is engaged in this process is a question worthy of study. Hebeloma is a genus of ectomycorrhizal species. The mushrooms acquire the nitrogen products and pass them along to the trees in exchange for sugars (carbohydrates). I see here a fascinating interplay among the trees of the forest, the mushrooms, and the suicides. Yes, it would be a great story, a macabre flick for the truly myco-film-noirish among us.

And we haven’t even considered the delectable notion that more than chemistry is involved here. What if the mushrooms are assisting the trees in acquiring particular genes from a seemingly endless supply of suicides? What if the trees are somehow in charge of all this? The trees attract the people and somehow prompt them to leave their bodies in the forest for the mushrooms to use to help maintain the health of the trees so that they can continue to attract the people and somehow prompt them to leave their bodies in the forest. Circle of Life. *Subarashi desu, ne?*

Our own NYMS site:

<http://mysite.verizon.net/nycmycology>

NEMF:

<http://www.nemf.org>

NAMA (North American Mycological Association):

<http://www.namyco.org>

Mushroom club newsletters online:

Mycological Society of San Francisco:

<http://www.mssf.org>

Sonoma County Mycological Association:

http://www.somamushrooms.org/SOMA_News/soma_news.html

Maine Mycological Association:

<http://www.mushroomthejournal.com/mma>

Eastern Penn Mushroomers:

<http://www.epennmushroomers.org>

Aita, cont. from p. 3

south of New Brunswick, there were more species of mycorrhizal mushrooms in the mixed deciduous forest. The choice *Lactarius volemus* and *corrugis*, and some boletes, *Russulas*, and *Amanitas* were just starting to come out.

And then the rains came to Middlesex County—flooding rains centered on this same Jamesburg area. Rainfall amounts of up to 10 inches were recorded in a short period. We went back there towards the end of the month expecting a bonanza. Instead, we were very surprised to find *far fewer* species of mushrooms compared to the walk two weeks earlier! With the exception of good numbers of *Lactarius volemus* and *corrugis*, practically no other mycorrhizal mushrooms were in sight. And there was practically nothing in nearby pitch pine woods. Too cool for July? Too much rain??

By far the best of this year's club walks was along Stony Brook in Harriman State Park. The ground was already starting to dry out on July 24 but we found plenty of *Lactarius volemus* and *corrugis* for the table along with about 20 different boletes—some of them good edibles. We found plenty of *Amanita* species (10), *Russula* (9), *Cantharellus* (5) and even *Cortinarius* (3), which are more often found in the fall. Ah, but the summer mushroom season, which in many years is just starting towards the end of July, was really coming to a close, since the rains had stopped earlier in July. Record heat was coming with little to no rain for the next two to three months.

Finally, by the second week of October conditions had changed. Lots of subtropical and tropical rains drenched our entire area. Almost all areas got at least a foot of rain, most of it falling within a one-week period (New York City recorded almost 17 inches of rain for October!). Once again great expectations!

Lots of mushroomers have their theories regarding the relationship of rainfall to the fruiting of mushrooms. For example, some choose to look 3 days after rains while others like to wait 8 to 10 days. I belong to the latter group. About 8 days after the first of the heavy rains, the club had a walk in Woodlawn Cemetery. Normally—even in somewhat dry years—we find some mycorrhizal mushrooms such as *Amanitas*, *Russulas*, and even *Boletus* species as well as a good assortment of other mushrooms. Again, we were surprised to find very few of these and just a few smallish puffballs—*Calvatia gigantea* and *C. craniformis* (I did return to the cemetery once and then again two weeks later and found very few fungi).

But that day in the cemetery we found a large number of *Agaricus*—most of them species that none of us recognized. First, let me say that the *Agaricus* of our area have never really been studied (only those of coastal California and the Southeast have been studied at all). No good keys or descriptions exist in many of our field guides for some of the *Agaricus* that we see. Quite often after heavy fall rains one can find species/varieties of the white-capped *Agaricus campestris* complex. They are commonly known as “pink-bottomed meadow mushrooms” because they initially have pink gills and grow in grassy areas such as meadows; they also have evanescent rings on their stems.

While we did find a few young white specimens, just about all the *Agaricus* were growing in the sandy, bare spots in the cemetery's grassy areas and looked very, very different. Some had gray caps with brownish/grayish hairs (in Orson Miller's *Mushrooms of North America* see his photo of *A. campestris*!), some had brownish scales (*A. campestris* var. *squamulosus*?: do a Google search and see

cont. p. 7

Aita, cont. from p. 6

a photo from a French club), and some were firmer mushrooms with reddish brown scales (*A. porphyrocephalus*: very small spores and no cheilocystidias, sterile cells on the gill edges; Roger Phillips' *Mushrooms of North America* has a picture and description of it). We also found a few horse mushrooms, which weren't uncommon this past October and into November.

More often than not—as in the cemetery—we are probably finding *A. macrosporus* and not *A. arvensis*. Unlike *arvensis*, *macrosporus* has unusually large spores (over 10 microns), is a bigger mushroom, does not stain yellow when touched, has a single-layered ring on the stem, often smells less of anise, and has noticeable hairs on the cap and lower stem which often turn increasingly yellow with age (and dryness?).

Besides *Agaricus*, mushroom hunters in October were finding giant puffballs (*Calvatia gigantea*) sometimes in huge numbers and giant sizes. A friend from Essex County in New Jersey reports that one was three times the size of his head.

The New Jersey Mycological Association invited our club on a November walk in the New Jersey Pine Barrens with the truffle expert Jim Trappe. Some of the New Jersey members actually came with rakes. Not unexpectedly, they didn't find any choice truffles (*Tuber* species), but they did uncover—close to the surface—two or three small, inedible *Rhizopogon* species (“false truffles”) growing with the pitch pines. Unlike the deciduous woods of our region which hardly produced mycorrhizal mushrooms this past fall, the pitch pine/oak woods had quite a few mushrooms that day: *Leccinum aurantiacum*, *Rozites caperata* (the Gypsy), *Russulas*, *Hebelomas*, and *Amanitas*—including a couple of varieties of *Amanita citrina*, one of which looked very much like *A. phalloides* (the Death cap) at first. On the way home we came across a huge collection of bright yellowish *Armillaria mellea*—the only ones that I saw the whole season. (In normal years *A. mellea* is the first of the ringed honeys and can often be found starting in August).

In November I found—both in Middlesex County, New Jersey as well as in the Bronx—another uncommon *Agaricus* that I had never seen before: a large and very firm mushroom that stained red when cut! It had a sheathing veil on the stem (remnants of the universal veil) that extended down from the ring enveloping the lower stem. The problem with identifying this mushroom was that the very few books that mention it usually describe its habitat as the sandy coastal areas of the west and east coasts. But the two collections (one of them a large fairy ring) were on roadsides in the sandy bare spots in otherwise grassy areas—not in coastal locations. Several of us ate it before knowing what it was or that it is considered by some to be one of the best of the edible *Agaricus*! With the help of an expert agaricologist, we determined it to be *Agaricus bernardii* = *A. halophilus* Peck. “Salt-Loving” is the common name that Arora has given to this *Agaricus* (*halophilus*). I deduced that in our area salt is put down on our roads during the snowy wintertime, and, in looking in Roger Phillips' *Mushrooms and Other Fungi of Great Britain and Europe*, this other habitat is mentioned. In the *Petersen Field Guide to Mushrooms*, the McKnights call it the “Parkway Mushroom.” But if you may be worried about roadside pollution, quite a few European studies show that *Agaricus* species—unlike shaggy manes and parasol mushrooms for example—do *not* accumulate lead!

IT'S TIME TO RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP

New York Mycological Society Membership Application and Renewal

Please note that membership dues terms have changed. Check the appropriate amount and send along with check(s) in U.S. dollars (payable to NYMS and to NAMA separately) to:

Alice Barner
Treasurer
New York Mycological Society
220 E.73 St. Apt. 10A
New York, NY 10021

Name _____
Address _____
City, State, Zip _____
Phone _____ Email _____

Renewing members (before April 1)	Individual—15.00	_____
	Family—25.00	_____
New members and late renewers (after April 1)	Individual—20.00	_____
	Family—30.00	_____
NAMA membership—32.00		_____

Release

I hereby release the New York Mycological Society, any officer or member thereof, from any legal responsibility for injuries or accidents incurred during or as result of any mushroom identification, field trip, excursion, meeting, or dining, sponsored by the Society.

Your signature(s): _____ Date: _____