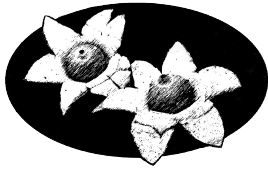


THE QUEENSLAND MYCOLOGIST



Bulletin of
The Queensland Mycological Society Inc.
Vol 5 Issue 4, Summer 2010



The *Queensland Mycologist* is issued quarterly. Members are invited to submit short articles or photos to the editor for publication. The deadline for contributions for the next issue is February 15, 2011. All original material may be reprinted or reproduced, unless otherwise stated, provided the source of the information and the copyright author are acknowledged.

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SOCIETY OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the Queensland Mycological Society are to:

1. Provide a forum and a network for amateur and professional mycologists to share their common interest in macro-fungi
2. Stimulate and support the study and research of Queensland macro-fungi through the collection, storage, analysis and dissemination of information about fungi through workshops and fungal forays;
3. Promote, at both the state and commonwealth levels, the identification of Queensland's macrofungal biodiversity through documentation and publication of its macro-fungi;
4. Promote an understanding and appreciation of the roles macro-fungal biodiversity plays in the health of Queensland ecosystems; and
5. Promote the conservation of indigenous macro-fungi and their relevant ecosystems.

Members are reminded that 2011 subscriptions (\$20 pp) are now due. Payment can be made by cheque mailed to the Treasurer, Queensland Mycological Society Inc., PO Box 295, Indooroopilly Qld 4068 or directly to the Treasurer at the next meeting. A Membership Renewal Form is included on page 15.

Please ensure that the Secretary (secretary[at]qms.asn.au) always has your current email address.

The Secretary, Queensland Mycological Society Inc, PO Box 295, Indooroopilly Qld 4068

QMS WEBSITE: www.qms.asn.au

Cover photo: Jon Atkinson took this photo of *Entoloma hochstetteri* during the Obi Obi track foray on October 30 (see page 8)

OFFICE HOLDERS 2009-10

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QMS CALENDAR 2011

Meetings are held in the Bailey Room at the Herbarium, Mt Coot-tha, commencing at 7pm on the second Tuesday of alternate months from February, unless otherwise scheduled. Check the website for any changes.

To assist those are unable to attend meetings, notes on the talks are included in the Queensland Mycologist wherever possible. However, the notes never do justice to the topic as they do not reflect the enthusiasm of the speaker or cover the discussion that follows. So remember, where possible it is better to attend the meetings, get the information first hand and participate in the invaluable information sharing opportunity.

QMS Meeting Programme 2011

Date	Speaker	Topic
8 Feb 2011	Dr Ross McKenzie, Veterinary Pathobiologist Foray reports:..	Poisonous fungi, including mycotoxins produced by moulds'. Cooloola
12 Apr 2011	QMS AGM Katrina Syme, Mycologist and Botanical Artist	
14 Jun 2011	Foray reports:	Cunningham's Gap, Springbrook Plateau, Girraween National Park, Chermshire Hills
9 Aug 2011	Fungimap Report Foray reports	
11 Oct 2011	Nigel Fechner Foray reports	Fraser Fungi
6 Dec 2011	David Fisher Foray reports	'Early mycologists, Elias Freis etc.

Meeting Supper Roster 2011

Two volunteers are required for each meeting – one to bring something savoury and one something sweet. TBA=Help! Any volunteers?

Date	Savoury	Sweet
8 Feb 2011	Andrew	Susanna
12 Apr 2011	QMS AGM - all to bring a small plate	
3 Jun 2011	Marie	Jutta
Aug 2011	TBA	TBA
Oct 2011	TBA	TBA
Dec 2011	Christmas Party all to bring a small plate	

QMS 2011 Field Trip Programme

Field trip details may change as a result of drought or other unforeseen circumstances. Check the website for changes.

Date	Location	Leader (contact details)
29 Jan 2011	Cooloola, Great Sandy National Park, Northern Sunshine Coast	Sapphire McMullan-Fisher (sapphire [at] flyangler.com.au)
26 Feb 2011	Cunningham's Gap, Main Range National Park	Susan Nelles (zefarella [at] gmail.com)
10-13 Mar 2011	Springbrook Plateau	Megan Prance (rhoda.spencer [at] gmail.com)
26 Mar 2011	Linda Garrett, Sunshine Coast	Patrick Leonard (patbrenda.leonard [at] bigpond.com)
15-17 Apr 2011	Girraween National Park	John Dearnaley & Patrick Leonard (Patrick Leonard patbrenda.leonard [at] bigpond.com)
28 May 2011	Chermside Hills, Brisbane	John Wrench (win_john [at] bigpond.net.au) & James Hansen
TBA	TBA, Brisbane.	Nigel Fechner (nigel.fechner [at] derm.qld.gov.au)
TBA	Mushroom Farm	Jon Atkinson (buildingbistro [at] hotmail.com)
TBA	Workshops & Forays for June, July, August, September, October & November.	

Notes on forays January to April 2011

Saturday 29 January 2011 - Southern Cooloola, Great Sandy National Park

Foray Leader: Sapphire McMullan-Fisher.

The aim of this project is to identify and document the macrofungi found at the long term 'Wallum' site, this will be the second QMS visit. The site is flat and sandy with heathy woodland vegetation ('Wallum'). Assuming there are summer rains this should be a good site for Boletes and *Amanitas*.

Saturday 26 February 2011 - Cunningham's Gap, Great Dividing Range 763m ASL.

Foray Leader: Susan Nelles

QMS has surveyed Mt Cordeaux (which straddles the Gap with Mt Mitchell) in autumn and spring since 2008. An abundance of growing and decaying rainforest vegetation types, rich substrates and soil ensure we find a good number of fungi on each trip. We will go beyond the initial, always productive 500 m to sample a different part of the forest.

There is ample parking, a toilet block and, once on the track, we leave behind the roar of the highway traffic. Bring water, insect repellent, rain gear.

<http://www.derm.qld.gov.au/parks/main-range/pdf/main-range-np-map.pdf>

March 10 to 13, 2011 – Springbrook National Park

Foray Leader: Megan Prance

In March 2011 (10th -13th) we plan to have an extended foray to Springbrook. This is one of our long term study sites. The accommodation is in a former guest house. I think there are 5 double bedrooms with en-suites and a family unit, a communal kitchen, dining and lounge room. A large work -conference room is in the basement of the building. Car pooling is encouraged due to shortage of car space.

What is different about Springbrook is that our information is linking in to broader research. Springbrook has a threatened ecosystem. It is classified as Cloud Rainforest. Australian Rainforest Conservation Society (ARCS) convinced the State Government to buy back private properties in the area with a plan for restoration and extension into the existing National Park.

ARCS is co-ordinating a number of research activities to better understand and document the process of rainforest regeneration. The area has been mapped out in grids, some sites have remote sensors to detect rainfall, temperature and animal species etc.

We have had 2 previous visits to Springbrook, where we have made random collections at 3 sites. The 2009 visit was cancelled due to the drought and this year's foray was cancelled also.

This time I propose an advance party arrives on Thursday afternoon. On Friday we will do 2 transects at Warblers site.

On Friday afternoon, those who are looking for a more social, or fun weekend will arrive.

On Saturday (if we have enough mycologists) we will split into 2 groups. One group will do social, random spotting and minimal collecting, the other group will do another transect.

This may be at Stevenson's site - 30 year regrowth rainforest, or at a newly acquired property that

has a plateau, a waterfall and a lower plane.

The afternoons will be spent completing the identifications, write ups, compiling the photos and preparing a presentation for the evening. In past years Aila Keto has come to give a very interesting presentation about Springbrook Rescue. Perhaps the "Social bunch" might come up with some evening entertainment for Saturday night?

Sunday morning will probably be a short foray with no collecting. Clean up the building Departure by 1.30.

I hope that by limiting our collecting to transects we will maximise the value of our survey and minimise the workload.

The accommodation is supplied at a big discount (\$25 per night). However this price is usually in exchange for providing significant labour or input. ARCS would appreciate a donation above this. There is always track building or weeding to be done!

For previous visits we have usually organised shared evening meals. This will be worked out closer to the time.

Some details about the Springbrook Rescue can be found at:

http://www.rainforest.org.au/RN42_intro.htm

April 14-17th 2011- Girraween National Park

Foray Leaders: Patrick Leonard & Dr John Dearnaley (USQ).

This is a new survey area for QMS of mixed eucalypt/ acacia vegetation on granite soils, with a diverse understorey. It should be rich in mycorrhizal fungi in autumn.

Accommodation for the weekend will be at the YMCA Recreation Centre at Storm King Dam, 16km south of Stanthorpe, on the way to Girraween NP.

Cost is \$25.00 pp per night if numbers are 25 or more, with an additional cost for use of the kitchen.

**FINALLY, DONT FORGET OUR CHRISTMAS MEETING ON TUESDAY 7TH DEC 2010
7.00pm**

SUSAN NELLES WILL GIVE A SHORT TALK ON HER ITALIAN FUNGI FORAY

2011 Workshop Programme

The 2011 workshop programme is yet to be finalised. Look out for details in future newsletters, and keep an eye on the QMS website. Workshops are given on a cost recovery basis so there will so will be a charge between \$10 and \$30.

President's Report

Sapphire McMullan-Fisher

Well I have returned from Africa having revelled in a change of scenery and the real luxury of not having email for 5 whole weeks! I did use the laptop a little but only to download images and record details, but as it was the dry season most of my shots were of flowers or scenery.

During my time away there have been some changes to both the QMS executive and the Queensland Fungi book committee, with Megan Prance standing down from all her previous positions. Megan has spent many hours putting names to fungi images from our many forays, and we hope to use some of those images for the QMS book. She has also stored microscopes, projectors etc, run workshops and usually keeps the A-V working during meetings. This means for QMS that we have to get more responsible and organised about how we handle images or if we handle them at all! So if anyone is keen to help QMS keep track of our fungi images please contact Fran, Pat or me.

Not only has Megan kept track of many QMS images but she is the primary permit holder for QMS which allows other members to collect fungi without going through the difficulties of getting a permit organised. All members had to do was send in the details of collections for our annual report which is much easier. To this end I hope we find another volunteer to become our primary permit holder, otherwise we may have to return to individuals getting their own permits!

Considering all of this I would like to thank Megan for all her work on images, data-bases, permits and time spent on the executive. She has put in a huge amount in effort, time and space - it is greatly appreciated. I hope she continues to come along to enjoy our events and the FUNgi.

As for most small interest groups the hard work of some particularly committed members keeps activities rolling along. To this end I would also like to thank Andrew Kettle, Diana Leemon, David Holdom, Fran Guard, Gretchen Evens, Patrick Leonard, Susan Nelles and all the speakers, foray leaders, recorders, and photographers for the efforts they put in.

As you can see from the events timetable, 2011 is beginning to fill up. It looks like it will be a great year ahead for forays and interesting speakers. I would like to remind members that Fungimap 6 will be held in Denmark, south-western Western Australia, July 14th-19th 2011. If members can attend it will be a great opportunity to go on some great forays, participate in some fungal workshops and meet some of Australia's most enthusiastic fungiphiles.

The weather bureau is predicting a wet summer so I expect we will be seeing fabulous fungi over the next season. We still want images and collections of our book targets so keep them in mind during your summer travels. Please check out in the members section information about the fungi we are looking for at <http://www.qms.asn.au/members/docs/museum/museum.html>.

If you want information about how to collect macrofungi, check out the Herbarium website http://www.derm.qld.gov.au/wildlife-ecosystems/plants/queensland_herbarium/index.html then go to the publications section on the right side of the page and look for '[A Guide to Collecting and Preserving Fungal Specimens for the Queensland Herbarium](#)'.

Those who are interested in fungal conservation should read a recent paper that works through the issues behind the lamentable state of fungal awareness in Australia:

Pouliot, A.M., May, T.W. (2010) The third 'F' — fungi in Australian biodiversity conservation: actions, issues and initiatives. *Mycologia Balcanica* 7, 41–48.

Email me if you would like to read it. The hard work put in by the Baxters and Andrew on the garden fungi gets a mention, which is wonderful. The highlights of the paper are that community

groups are working on raising public awareness so let's hope the different levels of government begin to support fungal conservation and management.

I wish everyone a safe and happy summer.

Obi Obi Track, Baroon Pocket Dam Foray, 30 October 2010

Pat Leonard

The foray was planned so that we collected a few specimens in the morning session and then went to the hall in Maleny to examine photograph and discuss them. This was in response to the discussions we had at our general meeting in August. When we assembled in the car park we found that none of us had brought a collecting box but fortunately Sapphire had five waxed paper bags, and that set the limit for what we could collect.

Despite the damp conditions and reasonably moist soil there were not many fungi about. Even so, we had only travelled fifty metres when Lil spotted a large brown puffball with a wrinkled cap and a distinct stem growing in soil on a bank. Our first thoughts were that this might be a *Calvatia*, as it was quite large, but when we cut it we discovered that the top part of the flesh was a yellow cream like butter and the lower half a pale buff, with a clear boundary between the two, but no separating diaphragm. Those features indicated that it was probably a *Handkea*.



This puffball, with its wrinkled cap and a distinct stem probably belongs to the genus *Handkea*. photos © Jon Atkinson

Our second find was made by Sapphire: A very neat, velvety brown bolete growing 30 centimetres above the ground on a mossy log. This one had creamy yellow pores and the flesh turned weakly blue when we cut it .

We then stumbled over a very large specimen of *Lactarius clarkeae*, an orange fungus with white milk. It has an interesting reaction when you rub it with an iron crystal (ferric alum): It turns pink first and then gradually green. Laboratory examination showed that the spores had reticulate (net like) ornamentation, so this may be a new *Lactarius* species.

Most of us had walked past a large eucalypt with a deep layer of litter around it when Petrus summoned us back and pointed out a brilliant blue fungus near the base of the tree (cover photo). As we approached it we saw others, and in the end we made a very good collection of 6 specimens of *Entoloma hochstetteri*.

Four of our five bags were now full and it was time to turn for home when Petrus gave a repeat performance, pointing out a very small scarlet red fungus growing inside a hollow log, clearly a *Hygrocybe*, but none of us knew which one.



This bolete is near the European *Boletus badius*, but is not that species. Photos © Pat Leonard (L) and Jon Atkinson (R).



Lactarius clarkeae photo © Pat Leonard



Hygrocybe miniata photo © Pat Leonard



Kim Nguyen, Pat Leonard and Sapphire McMullan-Fisher examining specimens from the foray. photo © Jon Atkinson

That completed our collections and we went to the Uniting Church hall in Maleny to eat our lunch, drink tea and hear Sapphire's presentation on how to take lab style photographs of our collections. Four of our five collections were photographed and full descriptions were written. We also looked at the spores of each one and had time for tea and chocolate cake.

Despite having the books in the QMS foray box with us we made no further progress in identifying the puffball or the bolete or the *Hygrocybe*. The good written descriptions did help considerably in later establishing that the puffball was most likely to be in the genus *Handkea*, the bolete is near the European *Boletus badius*, but is not that species, and the waxcap is *Hygrocybe miniata*.

Detective at Work – on an unknown Fungus

Frances Guard

At our last QMS meeting it became clear that many of us are keen to find new and interesting fungi. However, after finding them, we are stuck, nervous and not confident about what to do next in reaching an ID. So, most of us resort to a picture and/or a fresh specimen and a plea to Patrick or Sapphire to “Give it a name, please.”

Today I found yet another new fungus on our property, “Dilkusha”. What to do? Sapphire is overseas and Pat is away!

So I thought I’d try to work it out myself.

First, I took loads of pictures, both where I found it, showing its substrate and habitat, and when I got home. I then wrote a description as fully as I could, using the *Macroscopic Descriptions for Fungi* sheet, that all of us should have by now. I find this to be good discipline, as it makes me write down all the fine details that I would otherwise not notice or surely forget later. I drew a little sketch of the fungus – no great artwork, but another aid to memory. (Sometimes the dried specimen looks very different to the fresh.) Next, I put one of the fungal caps on paper for a spore print.

I still had no idea what the fungus was, though with a ring, white spores, and a broad cap with an umbo, it looked something like a *Macrolepiota*, but considerably smaller.

My next step was to look at some spores under the microscope. By looking at the *Spore Measurements and Characteristics* sheet (again available to all members), I thought they were ellipsoidal with a germ pore. I can measure them with my microscope, but even without that I could have said they were small and smooth walled. (They actually measured 8.9 X 4.8µm on average).

Where to go next? I find *Keys to the Tasmanian Families and Genera of Gilled Fungi* by David Ratkowsky and Genevieve Gates to be very useful. This article is only 9 pages and is available to anyone in QMS by going to the website:

http://www.utas.edu.au/docs/plant_science/tasfungi/Research.html. It was published in *The Tasmanian Naturalist*, Vol. 124 in 2002. In **Table 1** it took only three steps to suggest that my fungus was in the family Lepiotaceae. In **Table 3** the first step put it in that family. Then to **Table 5**, that looks at Genera. Step 4 uses microscopic features along with the overall size of the fruiting body and features of the annulus. Mine fitted *Leucocoprinus* and *Leucoagaricus* but not *Macrolepiota*.

By now, I felt I was getting well on track to an ID. My next step was to look at my field guides, (B. Fuhrer, A. Young and *Fungi Down Under*). This is where I often find I’m disappointed as they just don’t have the species that I have in hand. However, today I’m in luck! Fuhrer’s book has what looks very like my specimen. Of course his is perfect and mine is a little damaged by all the rain we’ve just had, but nevertheless it matches well enough and his rather brief description is good too.

So there I have it - a *Leucoagaricus rubrotinctus*!

As always I’m a great doubter of my own findings, so I then looked this fungus up the Internet and found several other pictures and descriptions that fitted. As a final check, I *will* ask Pat or Sapphire to confirm the ID when they return home.

All this took about 2 or 3 hours, and the fruiting bodies are now in the dryer.



Leucoagaricus rubrotinctus © Fran Guard

I'm sure anyone else in QMS could do this and have the satisfaction of making your own ID. I will certainly remember this species better than if I'd just asked someone else to do the work. (I know it doesn't always work out, but the more information one has, the better the chance of finding a name!).

Ethnic Attitudes to Fungi

David Fisher

Class, ethnicity, religious beliefs, sexual attitudes and folk wisdom determine ethnic attitudes to fungi.

About 45 years ago one of my fellow workers, a Sudeten German from Czechoslovakia, invited me to take a walk with him at lunch time. We walked in the meadow surrounding the building we worked in. In the meadow we came across a cluster of large mushrooms. My companion was overjoyed and told me those were good to eat. Until that moment I had never thought of gathering mushrooms. I estimate there were about 10 kilos of mushrooms and we each took half. I did not know the species. To make sure they were good to eat I took them to the resident mycologist at the nearby Morris Arboretum in Philadelphia. She enthused over the mushrooms and took one as her fee. I'm pretty sure they were *Calvatia gigantea*.

As a result of my talk with the mycologist I went to a meeting of the local mycological society. Most of the people at the meeting seemed to have non-English accents. One portly man with a French accent was in danger of dissolving into saliva when he talked of a morel he had found. I had other concerns and went to no more meetings of the mycological society. However, I felt my ignorance.

Here I was in my thirties and had never thought that people actually gathered mushrooms in the wild. Of course a little thought would have given me the idea that they must have done so at one time to find out that mushrooms were good to eat.

I also got the impression that English speaking people weren't particularly interested in gathering mushrooms.

This opinion was reinforced when I met Marie. Although she was born and educated in Australia she became interested in mushrooms only when her son Peter learned about them in a Norwegian school and told his mother what he learned.

In preparation for this talk I looked up the data base at the Caroline Simpson Library and Research Centre. The centre is a library in the complex of government buildings on Macquarie Street in Sydney. There is the Parliament House, New South Wales State Library, the Sydney Hospital, the Sydney Eye Hospital and the colonial gaol. Behind the colonial gaol is the Caroline Simpson Library and Research Centre (<http://www.hht.net.au/research/library>).

I looked up fungi in their database and found only two fleeting references to the authors of material on fungi, but no description of any mushroom or fungus.

I wondered about the lack of interest in the Anglophone peoples and came to the following hypotheses after further investigation:

The reasons for the lack of interest of the English speaking countries are:

1. Demography
2. Religion
3. Existing folk attitudes
4. Victorian sexual prudery”

The demographic factor is a result of the industrial revolution and Enclosure Acts.

The *Inclosure Acts* were a series of United Kingdom Acts of Parliament which enclosed open fields and common land in the country. This meant that the rights that people once held to graze animals on these areas were denied.

Inclosure Acts for small areas had been passed sporadically since the 12th century but most were passed between 1750 and the late 1800s (references at [3]) Under this process there were over 5,000 individual Inclosure Acts and 21% of land in England was enclosed, amounting to nearly 7 million acres (28,000 km²).

The Inclosure Acts encouraged many English country-dwellers to move to urban areas where they might typically become employed in wage labour jobs.

In addition the remaining farms largely became mechanized so fewer people were needed for food production. At present less than 3% of the English population is engaged in food production. The same is true for Canada and the United States although the mechanisation of agriculture is the main factor in their cases. In contrast France, Germany, Russia and Poland all have a peasantry who are closer to the land.

The alienation of people from the land creates a feeling that food is something that comes from the supermarket..

The English Christian attitude also creates a fear and distaste of mushrooms.

Many of the early English naturalists were Church of England clergy who supported a study of nature as a means to exhibit the glory of creation. Unfortunately they did not consider all creation as the work of God.

From page 19 of *Fungi* by Roy Watling:

The reasons for the lack of scientific knowledge of fungi compared with groups such as mammals, fish, birds and flowering plants originate with the early naturalists. They usually considered the fungi to be connected with the devil, and studying them at all was frowned upon by the church, right up to the 19th century, when the rest of natural history was blossoming. As a result of this taboo, scientific understanding of fungi, and especially their classification, has been hindered so much that it is no exaggeration to say that it lags almost 100 years behind that of many organisms. Thankfully, this unfortunate state of affairs is now rapidly changing as biologists appreciate the importance of these remarkable organisms and are searching for them in previously unexplored habitats.

A brief digression into theology: The idea of good and evil in nature or evil as an entity outside of ourselves is not found in all religions. It is not even found in all versions of Christianity.

If we see evil as a separate entity not only does evil exist, but there is also an evil spirit outside of us causing us to do evil. The dualism that pervades western Christianity and some other religions sees evil as external usually in the form of a devil. *The devil made me do it* is a denial of responsibility.

The kind of thinking that sees the action of an angry God in tsunamis and earthquakes is the same kind of thinking.

The dualism in English and western Christianity is much less influential in eastern Orthodox Christianity.

In the *Gulag Archipelago 1918-1956* Solzhenitsyn, an Orthodox Christian, denied evil as a separate entity.

If only there were evil people somewhere insidiously committing evil deeds, and it were necessary only to separate them from the rest of us and destroy them. But the line dividing good and evil cuts through the heart of every human being. And who is willing to destroy a piece of his own heart?

Judaism has a similar concept. There is a yetzer hara (evil inclination) and a yetzer hatov (good inclination) in every one of us. We are neither good nor bad. The normative opinion of Judaism is that the guilt for the sin of Adam died with him, and we are born with a clean slate. We can choose between cultivating the yetzer hara or the yetzer hatov."

Russians in general love mushrooms and gathering mushrooms. Evil mushrooms? Bozhemoi!

So much for Russians, Jews and theology for the moment.

I would like to cite some more examples of the English fear and hate of fungi.

*Beware of musserons, moch purslane,
gourdes and all other things
whiche wyll sone putrifie.*

Thomas Elyot, *The Castel of Helth* (1541)

Fungi ben mussherons . . . - There be two manner of them, one manner is deedly and sleeth them that eateth of them and be called tode stooles, and the other dooth not. They that be not deedly have a grosse gleymy [slimy] moysture that is dysobedyent to nature and dygestyon and be peryllous and dredfull to eate & therefore it is good to eschew them.

The Grete Herball (1526)

Many wantons that dwell neere the sea, and have fish at will, are very desirous for change of diet to feede upon the birds of the mountains; and such as dwell upon the hills or champion grounds, do long after sea fish. Many that do have plenty of both do hunger after the earth's excrescence's called mushrooms, whereof some are venomous, others not so noisome, and neither of them very wholesome meat. Whereof for the avoiding of the venomous qualities of the one, and the other which is less venomous may be discovered, I have thought good to set forth their picture's with their names and places of growth.

John Gerard, *Herball or Generall Historic of Plantes* (1597)

They are all very cold and moist and therefore do approach unto a venomous and murthering faculty and ingender clammy and cold nutriment if they be eaten.

Gerard, *Herball*

Few mushrooms are good to be eaten and most do suffocate and strangle the eater. Therefore I give my advice unto those that love such strange and new fangles meates to beware licking the honey among the thorns lest the sweetness of the one do not countervaille the sharpness and pricking of the other.

Cerard, *Herball*

Shelley used mushroom images to underscore total disintegration and decay of a garden.

Plants to whose names the verses feel loath

*Filled the place with a monstrous undergrowth,
Prickly and pulpous and blistering and blue,
And agarics and fungi and mildew and mould
Started like mist from the wet ground cold,
Pale fleshly as if the decaying dead
With a spirit of growth had been animated!*

*Their moss rotted off them, flake by flake,
Till the thick stalk stuck like a murderer's stake,
Where rags of loose flesh yet tremble on high,
Infecting the winds that wander by,*

P. B. Shelley, *The Sensitive Plant* (1820)

Arthur Conan Doyle also exploited images of death and decay evoked by mushrooms.

The rain had ceased at last, and a sickly autumn sun shone upon a land that was soaked and sodden with water. Wet and rotten leaves reeked and festered under the foul haze which rose from the woods. The fields were spotted with monstrous fungi of a size and colour never matched before—scarlet and mauve and liver and black. It was as though the sick earth had burst forth into foul pustules; mildew and lichen mottled the walls, and with that filthy crop. Death sprang also from the water soaked Earth.

Arthur Conan Doyle, *Sir Nigel* (1906)



Phallus rubicundus © David Holdom

English prudery was exemplified in Darwin's daughter, Etty in the following account regarding stinkhorns

In our native woods there grows a kind of toadstool called in the vernacular The Stinkhorn (though in Latin it bears a grosser name). The name is justified for the fungus can be hunted by scent alone, and this was Aunt Etty's great invention. Armed with a basket and a pointed stick, and wearing a special hunting cloak and gloves, she would sniff her way through the wood, pausing here and there, her nostrils twitching when she caught a whiff of her prey. Then with a deadly pounce she would fall upon her victim and poke his putrid carcass into her basket. At the end of the day's sport the catch was brought back and burnt in the deepest secrecy on the drawing room fire with the door locked—because of the morals of the maids.

Gwen Raverat, *Period Piece* (1952)

D. H. Lawrence was not guilty of prudery, but he still shared the lamentable attitude toward mushrooms common in England.

*Full of seething, wormy, hollow feelings
rather nasty—
How beastly the bourgeois is!
Standing in their thousands, these appearances, in damp England
what a pity they can't all be kicked over
like sickening toadstools, and left to melt back, swiftly
into the soil of England.*

D. H. Lawrence, *How Beastly the Bourgeois Is* (1923)

Many in the Anglo-Saxon cultures have been alienated from the wild. This is becoming less so with the growth of the environment movement. The average American's knowledge of wild food is still usually limited to a dandelion salad once eaten in a sophisticated French restaurant; they never realize that their forebears brought the dandelion from Europe as a cultivated salad green. Indeed, in modern times our distance from the natural world of plants and animals, food gathering, and animal husbandry is considerable, - our distance from mushrooms and fungi is a yawning chasm.

In the parks, meadows, and hills of every town or on the beaches of English-speaking, industrialized countries, however, one commonly sees immigrants from Asia collecting a large variety of different plants for home consumption. And descendants of the great Slavic cultures of eastern Europe and Russia cannot wait to get out of the city and into the woods each spring and fall. In addition, the offspring of certain other immigrant groups, such as Italians, have maintained a small cadre of dedicated mushroom hunters. These are exceptions in the English-speaking cultures, tolerated as being mildly eccentric.

R. Gordon Wasson, an American banker-ethnomycologist indicted all Celtic and Germanic peoples as being mycophobic. Possibly my German friend and the French man salivating over mushrooms were exceptions. Wasson did admit that travel and education have had some impact in recent generations—so much so, in fact, that certain food companies in western Germany, for example, have been exploiting the wild mushroom resources of places like the Pacific Northwest in the United States to satisfy the appetites of their population, their own resources having become exhausted, polluted, or otherwise inadequate. It is also probably true that the current passion the French have for the mushroom is relatively recent. Some reports during the late nineteenth century indicate more wild mushrooms being offered for sale in English markets than in the markets of Paris. This may have been due to the regulations banning mushrooms for a while from Paris—because of a serious outbreak of poisoning—rather than to any intrinsic dislike. However, the following quotation reflects the French attitude only 200 years ago:

But whatever dressing one gives to mushrooms, to whatever sauce our Apiciuses put them, they are really good but to be sent back to the dung heap where they were born.

Louis de Jacourt, *Cbampignons*, (1753)

However, we remain at a loss to explain mycophobia.

Of course there are islands of mycophiliacs amid the sea of mycophobes just as living organisms, according to Schrodinger, are islands of increasing entropy in a sea of decreasing entropy.

Let us leave the Anglo-Saxon cultures to go to other parts of the world.

Just as villains are generally more interesting than noble heroes, mycophilia is possibly less interesting than mycophobia. Nevertheless we will leave for the blessed lands.

Various European cultures have their favourite mushrooms.

Italians prefer the porcini (*Boletis edulis*) and the white truffle.

The Germans and Swiss prefer the chanterelle.

The land at the opposite pole from England regarding mushrooms is Russia.

Wasson, the American banker-ethnomycologist who indicted all Celtic and Germanic peoples as mycophobic had a Russian wife. His first contact with mushrooms was through his wife, Valemina.

Two extracts from his book - *Soma: Divine Mushroom of immortality* (1968)

We had been married less than a year and we were off on our first holiday, at Big Indian in the Catskills. On that first day, as the sun was declining in the west, we set out on a stroll, the forest on our left and a clearing on the right. Though we had known each other for years we had never discussed mushrooms together. All of a sudden she darted from my side. With cries of ecstasy she flew to the forest glade, where she had discovered mushrooms of various kinds carpeting the ground. Since Russia she had seen nothing like it. Left planted on a mountain trail, I called to her to take care, to come back. They were toadstools she was gathering, poisonous, putrid, disgusting. She only laughed the more: I can hear her now. She knelt in poses of adoration. She spoke to them with endearing Russian diminutives- She gathered the toadstools in a kind of pinafore that she was wearing, and brought them to our lodge. Some she strung on threads to hang up and dry for winter use. Others she served that night, either with the soup or the meat, according to their kind. I refused to touch them.

Second extract:

In three separate visits to the Russian republic, I have yet to meet anyone who did not pick and eat wild mushrooms. Fungi appear in salted or pickled form at the beginning of meals during most of the year. Mushroom hunting is not restricted to the country folk. Every urbanite has favorite spots outside the cities in the vast birch and pine forests that still cover much of the land. In fall, trains make impromptu stops along the way to pick up or let off women or families on a day's mushroom outing. It is a form of national recreation. Small brochures and pamphlets can be purchased at stores and kiosks along the streets, with drawings or photographs and descriptions of the commonly edible species.

Naturally, the Russian literature reflects this passion. In Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina* (1877), mushroom hunting plays a part in at least three scenes. Always it is a joyful and pleasurable experience. In one scene the children are squabbling, having been rebuked by their strict governess, who is naturally English. Their mother comes in and suggests that they get into their old clothes and go out mushroom gathering. The atmosphere immediately changes as the nursery is filled with yelps of delight and anticipation. A love scene in the woods is interrupted when the couple gets sidetracked into a discussion about mushroom identification.

Unlike the Anglo-Saxons and especially regarding their Puritan tendencies Asian cultures actively admire the phallic nature of some fungi. One of the common Chinese names for penis is the "swelling mushroom" In Japan, the more phallic the appearance, the greater the price commanded by the mushroom. Many mushrooms are imbued with the power of enhancing potency and performance.

To Japanese mushroom hunting can even be a mystical experience.

*My voice
Becomes the wind
Mushroom hunting.*

Shiku (nineteenth-century Japanese poet)

Tolstoy wrote: *Happy families are all alike; every unhappy family is unhappy in its own way.* Greater and more fascinating literature comes from dysfunctional families and the mycophobic English on the subject of fungi. So I think I will stop here.

Queensland Mycological Society Inc

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