



SOMA News

THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE SONOMA COUNTY MYCOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION
A NON-PROFIT 501(c)(3) EDUCATIONAL SOCIETY, DEDICATED TO THE MYSTERY AND APPRECIATION OF LOCAL FUNGI SOMAmushrooms.org

VOLUME 20 ISSUE 7

MARCH 2008

2008 SEASON CALENDAR

March

**March 20th (Vernal Equinox) »
Meeting—7pm**
Sonoma County Farm Bureau
Speaker: **Mia Rose Maltz**

March 22nd » **Foray, SPSP.**

April

April 17th » Meeting—7pm
Sonoma County Farm Bureau
Speaker: **TBA**

April 19th » **Foray, SPSP.**

May

May 15th » Meeting—7pm
Sonoma County Farm Bureau
Important Membership Meeting!!



EMERGENCY MUSHROOM POISONING IDENTIFICATION

After seeking medical attention, contact **Darvin DeShazer** for identification at (707) 829-0596. Email your photos to muscaria@pacbell.net. Photos should show all sides of the mushroom. Please **do not** send photos taken with cell phones—the resolution is simply too poor to allow accurate identification.

NOTE: Always be 100% certain of the identification of any and all mushrooms before you eat them!

A free service for hospitals, veterinarians and concerned citizens of Sonoma County.

SPEAKER OF THE MONTH



Mia Rose Maltz

Thursday March 20th—Farm Bureau

Mia Rose Maltz is a co-founder and Executive Director of the RITES Project (www.ritesproject.org) and has lived in west Sonoma County for nine years. Mia has been learning about mycology, mushroom cultivation and mycorestoration for twelve years and has taken several classes with Paul Stamets, founder of Fungi Perfecti. She was certified in Permaculture Design in 1999 at OAEC. In 2003, she was certified to teach Permaculture at the Diamond Light Center in Oakland. Mia is a Fellow of the Leadership Institute for Ecology and the Economy and she enjoys teaching about Permaculture, mycorestoration, and bioremediation. She attended Colgate University, completed her B.A. in Culture, Ecology, and Sustainability from New College of California in 2000. Mia is currently pursuing her Masters of Science degree in Biology, Chemistry and Environmental Studies at Sonoma State University.

Mia will be presenting a talk based on the Amazon Mycorenewal Project she is spearheading in Ecuador. The talk will cover research, education and applications of mycoremediation soil renewal techniques for restoring land in the Ecuadorian Amazon, in partnership with communities poisoned by widespread oil pollution.

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SOMA's *Amanita muscaria* logo by Ariel Mahon

PRESIDENT'S LETTER

The highlight of our February was the awesome turnout of the SOMA and MSSF clubs at the first 'We Love Salt Point Cleanup Day'. Forty or so people were there. We collectively collected over 700# of trash counting the old logging cable in the back of Woody's truck. We were blessed with a beautiful day, great friends, great food and lots of cool gifts. There were only six tickets left in the tub at the end of the raffle. More importantly the two folks that mattered most were Ranger Heidi Horvitz and Ranger Wood. Both are avid mushroomers and protectors of our park.

SPSP faces some hard choices as we go forward. First is the invasion of people into the park. In the last few years there have been waves of greedy pillagers who do not understand the concept of public responsibility of public parks. The abalone and near shore fishes are being over harvested by careless fisherman who take many limits of sea life and edibles that are unregulated. In the case of mushrooms, certain overly zealous reapers are taking vast amounts of mushrooms in SPSP, whom, for the most part, do not respect park boundaries, private property or daily limits. In both cases these groups throw their trash on the ground, are careless with the flora and generally only 'take' from the park.

The second issue we have all read about *ad nauseam* – budget cuts. Today Woody and Heidi are about it for staff, except for seasonal help with summer use. They just don't have enough hands to protect the park. To this end they both were thankful and positively impressed with the great turnout at the cleanup day. Without our help, the trash would not be picked up. We as mushroomers have two great new friends and allies in our mission to keep SPSP open to mushroom collecting.

The hope and dream of the rangers and the mushroom clubs is that the cleanup day is the seedling of a Friends of Salt Point Park organization that will help the park face these important issues in the future. One thing they do not need is another barrage of letter writing and heated opinion statements. Both rangers said that they are working diligently to keep the park open to our use. The easy path, the cheapest path is to close the park to mushroom collecting. They are being careful with this most delicate and sensitive issue. We could not ask for better representation.

-Bill Hanson

FORAY OF THE MONTH

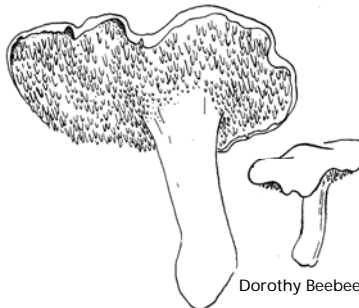
Saturday, March 22nd

Meet at the southern end of **Fisk Mill Cove** in **Salt Point State Park** at 10 AM.

\$6 daily parking fee per car now at SPSP!

Bring a potluck dish to share; vegetarian dishes are always welcome! Please bring your own glasses, plates and eating utensils. Besides the positive environmental reasons and benefit to the gastronomic experience, it will help minimize the amount of trash to be hauled out. Contact foray leader Bill Wolpert at (707) 763-3101 for more information.

Members are asked to avoid hunting the club site for at least two weeks prior to a SOMA event. It's only through your cooperation that all members can enjoy a successful foray and experience the thrill of the hunt!



From a Mushroom Dyer's Journal

The sun is out!!!! ...after a heavy, and I do mean heavy winter! I'm *still* recovering from the side effects of my fallen fir tree – all 150 feet of 5 ft. diameter of it across my neighbors unoccupied home...and I went down to inspect to see if there was any *Phaeolus schweinitzii* at its ill fated base (making lemonade out of lemons?) – no, none, – but then I only find that fungal dye treasure AFTER the fact – maybe next year if I am still here on this Douglas fir shaded (less and less) hillside..... None the less, I sat out this latest storm down in my daughter's treeless home in Cotati! Two downed fir trees over my head in my lifetime is enough, already, thank you very much.

I did have a "vacation" of sorts down in La Jolla last week as a guest (mushroom dye speaker) of the San Diego Mycological Society which had just received an unseasonable amount of rain the few days before, and went mushroom hunting in the higher elevations with disappointing results. However, a friend in Del Mar invited us over to inspect a stump choked with mushrooms which turned out to be a gigantic flush of over-the-hill *Omphalotus olivascens*! Very excitedly, we picked as much as we could to have a decent dyebath to show at the San Diego Fair.

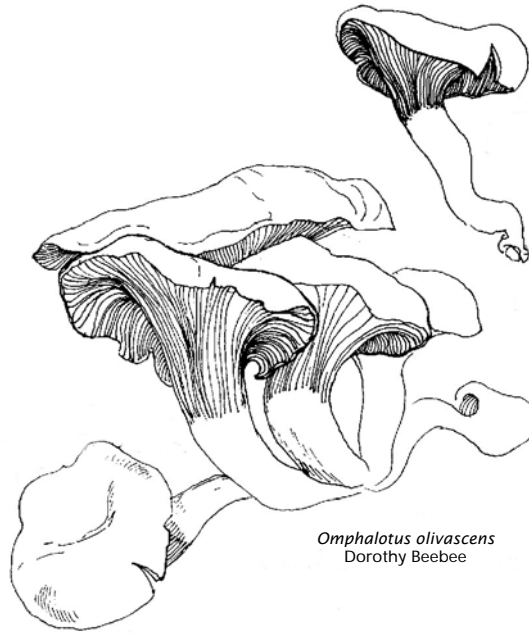
They were in what I call "prime condition" (just short of rotting), and the inner flesh was a deep purple. When these fungi are fresh, the flesh is the same oliveaceous-pumpkin-orange as the surface of the caps, but the flesh definitely seems to turn toward violet when old. I've noticed that the dye in fresh young specimens emerges only after extensive boiling, but if the freshly picked specimens are old, the purple dye is almost immediate, imparting a wonderful lavender dye to

unmordanted wool, a blueish purple to alum mordanted wool and a distinct lovely forest-to-olive green to wool and silk which has been mordanted with iron. These mushrooms are also excellent instant dyers, when picked fresh and DRIED, and we used these in great quantities with reckless abandon success at the recent International Fungi & Fibre Symposium in Mendocino in January, 2008 (see <http://www.mushroomsforcolor.com/SymposiumMushroomDyes.htm> – thank you Tim Horvath and Susan Libonati-Barnes!) – since it was the first time they had ever been used at a Fungi/Fibre Symposium since those began – and we on the west coast of the USA need to show that we could obtain purples worthy of the *Hapalopilus nidulans* found so easily on the NE coast and in Scandinavia! The fibers need to be pulled out quickly when

you reach the color wanted, as successive bath will start to turn to a silvery grey-lavender – hard to describe. The dye leaves a lovely shimmery iridescent range of hues on silk. This is another one of those dyes that react favorably to pH changes from acid (white vinegar) to alkaline (washing soda – see "SOMA News", Vol. 12, Issue 6, February 2000) on protein fibers.

Excited with our results on wool and silk, someone brought over a pristine white 100% cotton San Diego Mycological Society T-shirt (which had purple and green lettering) to throw into the leftover demonstration dyepot, hoping for a nice lavender – but instead, our simmering gave us a lovely pale sage green! They are going to auction it off at their next group meeting! I tried to convince their board to change their logo from the

lowly *Lepista nuda* (good for nothing except marginal eating), to *Omphalotus olivascens*, but no luck...Maybe SOMA can do something like that for THEIR next SOMA Camp T-shirt... and I'll supply a drawing for it!



Omphalotus olivascens
Dorothy Beebee



Park Clean-up Day!

Getting ready to pick up trash at Salt Point State Park on 2/16. It was a beautiful day and a lot of trash was found as well as some great mushrooms. Nice potluck too! This was a multi-club effort and one of the good things to come out of this was an idea by Ranger Heidi Horvitz to start a "Friends of Salt Point" organization. Look for it, and be ready to pitch in to help keep this resource pristine.

Photo by Darvin DeShazer



February Foray Report

It Takes a Pro and a Little Concentration

By Marianne Wheeler

“O.K., we’re going to get the limit for the Wheelers, today!” Bill Hanson, SOMA’s revered president, declared one fine February morning as we were driving up to Salt Point State Park. My husband Jim and I had joined Bill Hanson and Steve Hendrickson in Forestville and were headed north to pick mushrooms. It was a beautiful day, the kind that Jim calls just another dull day in paradise, with the sky so blue, the sun so bright, and the air so clear as you will find it only on a mild winter’s day in the “Redwood Empire” of Northern California.

The limit is five pounds of mushrooms that can be picked legally by one person in one day. That’s a lot of mushrooms! Bill brought a portable scale and assured us that we would have no trouble at all filling our baskets and bags with a bounty of edible mushrooms. I smiled, but I thought, sure, I should be so lucky. I have been on many SOMA forays, but I’m the one back at the pot luck lunch admiring everyone’s finds while adding a few forlorn fungi from my empty basket. What a dream come true it would be to wander through the forest and actually find five pounds of delectable mushrooms!

We parked in Salt Point State Park and barely got out of the car when Steve Hendrickson had disappeared into the woods. He is a recent forager and learned about SOMA through Bill and this year’s Mushroom Camp, where he created and ran the communications sound system. He knew where he was going and what he was looking for. Jim grabbed his hiking stick and followed, and I attached myself to Bill. I figured he was my best bet to fulfill that promise of finding our limit. At this time of year, we expected to hunt for *Craterellus tubaeformis* (yellow foot), *Craterellus cornucopioides* (black trumpet), and *Hydnum repandum* (hedgehog), but I would be happy for just about anything with a tasty cap or stem.

We went forth and soon were surrounded by thick undergrowth and tall trees. I looked this way and that, moving about slowly, but every time I bent down to pick up my first mushroom it was only a leaf, or an acorn, or a rock. It felt wonderful to walk on the soft forest floor and to touch the thick moss on trees and branches and fallen logs.

I marveled at the emerald ferns growing all over and saw new grasses and leaves forming, ready for another spring. High above, in the crown of a tall fir, a big, black crow landed and looked down at me. It sat very still, head cocked to one side, maybe wondering what to report back to the witch in the gingerbread house – one adult Hansel

and Gretel on their way. I walked on, my basket swinging lightly on my arm, and reflected on the beauty and serenity of this magical world. No wonder so many fairy tales take place in the forest. I could easily see a big, bad wolf behind that tree over there, laying in wait for Little Red Riding Hood.

I looked around. Where were the others? I saw movement further down by a small creek and went towards it. It was Bill. His basket was almost full! “There you are, Marianne! Come see, I’ve found another patch of hedgehogs,” he said and pointed at the moss. “They are all over the place. Here, pick these and then go over there, that log by the big fern is covered with yellow feet.” And, wow, right in front of me I saw bunches of sandy beach colored mushrooms dotting the green ground, happy hedgehogs standing proud. I picked them tenderly and hurried over to the yellow feet balancing themselves on a long, mossy log. Mushrooms, mushrooms everywhere! Which ones to pick first? I started to feel giddy.

“This is a tan oak,” Bill coached me, holding a bunch of leaves up to my face. “Good mushroom habitat. And, check the duff carefully. Black trumpets like to hide in plain view. Once you have spotted some, follow the path water runs off a hillside. Chances are you’ll find many more.”

He was right. My basket was filling up with velvety, petunia-shaped blacks, plump hedgehogs, and delicate yellow feet. I was now sweeping the forest floor systematically, mushrooms dancing in my head. I honed in on this fabulous fungi bonanza, sparing only the young and the old. Bill was leading the way. I started to plan recipes. What a feast this treasure will provide! My basket was getting heavy. I crawled over logs and under bushes, and gasped at discovering more and more of perfectly grown wild edible mushrooms.

It was way beyond lunchtime and Bill was urging me to find our way back to the others. My head was spinning with mushroom fever, but my basket was filled to the brim and I reluctantly followed him back to the car. Jim and Steve had big smiles on their faces and we all took turns hanging our booty onto Bill’s portable scale. Yup, we had collected the limit! We broke out a bottle of wine and shared a great picnic in the woods, celebrating our good fortune.

What I realized once and for all is that you can’t just saunter down the mossy path expecting to find a toad to turn into a prince. You’ve got to stay focused and get down on your hands and knees and get your limit. Of course, it helps to go with a pro.

Park Clean Up Day—2/16/08

Over 35 hardy souls suffered the beautiful day yesterday at Salt Point State Park to CLEAN UP the trash, litter and debris found scattered around the park. Over 600 pounds was collected and of course some baskets of mushrooms were also filled. One *Hydnum repandum* was the size of a small dinner plate!

A special thank you to MSSF for paying for the parking fee for all the clean up workers. And the raffle, sponsored by SOMA, following the pot luck was stuffed with so many prizes that almost everyone got one!

At right are some of the fungi found and photos posted to Mushroom Observer.

It was a great day,
Darv—SOMA Science Advisor
SOMAmushrooms.org
MushroomObserver.org - 11,000 photos

| | |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| <i>Camarophyllus pratensis</i> | <i>Hygrocybe psittacina</i> |
| <i>Cantharellus cibarius</i> | <i>Leotia lubrica</i> |
| <i>Chlorociboria aeruginascens</i> | <i>Nidula candida</i> |
| <i>Clavulina rugosa</i> | <i>Oligoporus chioneus</i> |
| <i>Clavulinopsis umbrinella</i> | <i>Omphalotus olivascens</i> |
| <i>Craterellus cornucopioides</i> | <i>Rhodocollybia maculata</i> |
| <i>Gyromitra infula</i> | <i>Stereum hirsutum</i> |
| <i>Hydnum repandum</i> | <i>Tremellodendropsis</i> |
| <i>Hydnum umbilicatum</i> | <i>tuberosa</i> |
| <i>Hygrocybe flavescens</i> | |



On the way up to the Great Garbage Clean Up Day done by some MSSF and SOMA folks on February 16 those in my car saw an osprey sitting atop a telephone pole along Highway 1 just past the turn from Bridgehaven and then we saw another on the next pole. Then two more close nearby. Never seen so many. Then a coyote. Was it going to be auspicious or were we in for a trickster type time?? Were we to be like fish diving raptors or scrounging scavengers and find more garbage than the others? Excitement was incipient in the heated car air.

I don't want to write too much about that debris-snatching event other than we were so hurting to find trash on the trail we were assigned to (Stump Beach) that we began to spot "foolers." You morels hunters know of what I write—those Doug-fir cones and/or burnt small sticks in a dark spot little eye deceivers that make you almost pick them up until you are right up on them. But bending over to distinguish if this or that object was real trash or just an oddly-lighted leaf? Huh, what's up with that?

On the MSSF group list there were a couple of mentions of the quality regarding the food SOMAnS provide at our gatherings. Those "vegan beans with matsutake" that kitchen stalwart/volunteer Marilyn brought were the big hit. Other goodies included cornbread, salsas, salads, dips, pies and cookies. We country folk like to show city dwellers that we fellers know a thing or three.

The not many edible fungi species available now around here are getting dried out but this rain (week of 02/19) should help spring more and perhaps hydrate what's up now.

Isn't it kind of like how year after year we see the acacias flowering, the pussy willows pillowing, and the plums budding out around this date and we exclaim to the Gods that, "Gosh, isn't it early for that to happen," that we might forget, yearly, how few different mushrooms fruit now? Could be like that.

Hedgehogs of two flavors, blacks of two too, yellow footed winters and the not-as-common *Camarophyllus pratensis* seem to be what is in our woods these days.

There are also some golden chanterelles available commercially today from further north.

We are coming up towards the end of our local picking season and except for the wonderfully tasty—and potentially dangerous to pick—*Amanita velosa* appearing on our viewing screens soon we might start looking east up to the western slopes of the Sierras for springtime fungi.

And that means morels. Tune in later for where to go, when, and how much those morel-patch maps will be costing this year. Oh—there are no morel patches in California?

Some nice folks have asked for a recipe or two from our SOMA camp Feast. We did one last month and this month is presented the chicken thigh dish.

CLIP & SAVE 

Chicken Thighs With Mushroom Stuffing

Serving Size: 6 Preparation Time: 0:45

| Amount/Measure | Ingredient | Preparation Method |
|----------------|-----------------------------|--------------------|
| 6 Ea | chicken thighs, boneless | |
| 1 1/3 Tbl | olive oil | |
| 1/2 C | porcini, dried, rehydrated | chopped small |
| 1 C | button mushrooms or other | chopped small |
| 1 1/2 Cloves | garlic | minced |
| 1 1/2 Tsp | Italian parsley | chopped small |
| 1 Tbl | rosemary, fresh | minced |
| 1 Tbl | oregano, dried | crumbled |
| 1/4 Tsp | lemon zest | chopped |
| 2 Tsp | Marsala wine | |
| 2 1/4 Tsp | heavy cream | |
| 1 1/2 Tbl | Parmesan cheese | grated |
| 1 Tbl | bread crumbs | |
| S & P | | |
| 2 Tbl | Italian parsley for garnish | chopped fine |

Oven at 375

1. Pound thighs under plastic until thin (about 1/3" or less).
2. Sauté the mushrooms in oil with the garlic, rosemary, parsley, and oregano, S & P, until cooked. Add the zest and the wine and reduce. Add the cream, remove from the heat, the parmesan, and add the crumbs to stiffen.
3. Place 1 1/2 Tbl of the stuffing in each thigh, roll up, place two toothpicks to help close.
4. Brown each side of the thighs in a pan over high heat and then place them in a roasting pan in the oven. Cook for 18-20 minutes--check with an insert thermometer for 160.

For service they can be cut in half for a small dish then napped with porcini gravy and garnished with minced parsley.

By Jondi Gumz, Sentinel staff writer

January 14, 2007

Santa Cruz

When a family of six showed up at Dominican Hospital complaining of nausea, vomiting and diarrhea, it was more than a routine case for doctors Todd Mitchell and Wendy Knapp. Once they heard all six had eaten tacos made with wild mushrooms, they knew what to suspect. Most likely the family had eaten "death cap" mushrooms, a fungus that could destroy their liver and kidneys and eventually cause death.

The hard part was telling the family. "Oh my God," said one family member, a 29-year-old man. "I just ate a ton of this stuff. Am I going to need a liver transplant? Am I going to die?" The family, ranging in age from 17 to 83, lives in Aptos. They had picked several varieties of mushrooms in Wilder Ranch State Park on New Year's Day. Now they faced the fight of their lives. In the United States, there is no known antidote for mushroom poisoning. Unless doctors could find one, the meal they had eaten could be their last.

Deadly history

Even experts can mistake *Amanita phalloides*, known as the "death cap," for similar-looking nontoxic mushrooms. Ten years ago, one person in Santa Cruz County and another in Sonoma County died after eating death cap mushrooms. Five years ago, a couple from Jordan visiting Watsonville fell gravely ill and spent weeks in the hospital before recovering. Typically, wild mushrooms appear in wooded areas in Northern California late in December or early January. Often people who pick them are immigrant families familiar with mushrooms in their native country. Of the 5,000 known mushroom species, about 100 are poisonous, with the death cap accounting for most fatalities.

*Mushroom poisoning
sent nearly 400 people
to the hospital in California
last year.*

For Mitchell, who had worked at Dominican Hospital for 10 years, this case was his first. Mitchell, 49, is married with three children, ages 14, 12 and 9. He's slender with short brownish hair. If he has to work late, he likes to eat at Cafe La Vie for its vegetarian entrees. He knows medical miracles are possible. The staff at Dominican Hospital, he said after finishing a salad late one Friday night, saved the life of his wife last year.

The way doctors confirm mushroom poisoning is with a blood test. When the Aptos family came into the hospital Jan. 2, the levels of liver enzymes were in a normal range, from 25-50. Six hours later, the numbers jumped into the 100s, and doubled every six hours after that. Those counts were like fingerprints, confirming the presence of

"amatoxin" poison. Even when the uneaten mushrooms were brought in for the doctors to examine, and none was a death cap, Mitchell and Knapp felt it was prudent to "prepare for the worst and hope for the best" Like an overdose of the painkiller Tylenol, amatoxin shuts down the liver over a period of days. Mitchell knew of no "ironclad" antidote. He could not give the family any guarantees. "We're going to do everything humanly possible," the two physicians told the family. "We're pulling out all the stops"

Overseas solution

The morning after being admitted to the hospital, the patients were feeling better, but they actually were getting more sick. The toxin was binding to the RNA in their cells, shutting down the liver's normal operations, and refusing to let go. The liver turns food into chemical components for use in other parts of the body, stores sugar and vitamins and filters waste and poisons out of the bloodstream. Without a liver, the body can't function.

Mitchell is not only a physician, he's also a volunteer at Mount Madonna School, run by a spiritual community. Asked if he's the kind of doctor who turns to prayer, he demurred. "If it's God's will for them to recover, they will," he said. "If it's not, they won't. It's not kosher for me to determine what's God's will. My time is better spent figuring out what they need to heal".

Into the night that Tuesday and early Wednesday morning, Mitchell looked for information. Using Google Scholar, a search engine of scholarly literature, he found a promising avenue of treatment: Extract from milk thistle, a nuisance weed for farmers and used as a liver tonic in European folk medicine. Milk thistle extract, or silymarin, has been used in Europe to treat cirrhosis of the liver, scarring that often proves fatal. In a 1970s experiment, beagles that received milk thistle intravenously were protected from mushroom poisoning.

That treatment, intravenous milk thistle extract, is not available in the United States and is not approved by the Food and Drug Administration. Mitchell found a pharmaceutical company, Madaus Pharma, in Brussels, Belgium, that produced Legalon-Sil, milk thistle extract in an intravenous form. But it was too late to call because of the time difference.

Red tape

Very early Wednesday morning, Mitchell called the company and got the number of its office in Germany, where the drug is approved for use. He reached Peter Odenthal of Madaus in Cologne, Germany, and explained the situation. It was already afternoon in Germany. Odenthal agreed to donate enough Legalon to treat all six family members. Shortly thereafter, Mitchell got a call from Joe Veilleux, U.S. president of Madaus whose office is in Pittsburgh.

It was bad news.

The medication could be stopped at the border unless the FDA approved its use. "You can't ship over anything you want even if it's a dire emergency," said Veilleux. "Unfortunately it's not registered for us here. It's awfully

(Continued on page 7)

(Continued from page 6)

expensive to do". He referred Mitchell to a researcher at the National Institutes of Health. NIH, a federal agency and one of the world's foremost research centers, takes the position that there is not enough evidence that milk thistle has medical benefits. The agency says studies of oral milk thistle conducted outside the United States are flawed.

A multi-year study of using milk thistle orally to treat hepatitis, a liver disease, is in the beginning stages in the United States. It has the support of the National Advisory Council for Complementary and Alternative Medicine. If the FDA granted an emergency IND number, identifying Legalon as an investigative new drug, the medication could be shipped to California.



**DEATH
CAP**

Mitchell also had read up on oral milk thistle in capsules. The FDA hasn't approved that either, but a lot of companies sell milk thistle extract in that form as a supplement. One of them was right in Santa Cruz: Aloha Medicinals. Once the clock ticked past 8 a.m., when the company opens for business, Mitchell called and spoke to company president Megan Powers. Research director John Holliday responded almost immediately, delivering a case of Aloha's Bio-Silymarin to Dominican Hospital. Usually it costs \$12.95 for a bottle of 60 capsules. In this case, there was no charge.

The patients began taking the capsules that day, but Mitchell wasn't sure it would be enough. The patients were already nauseous and vomiting. Candace Walker, the medical librarian at Dominican Hospital, faxed information to the FDA about the patients, their conditions and the lab data to bolster Mitchell's request for an emergency IND number.

But the FDA wasn't the only roadblock.

Mitchell would have to get approval from the Institutional Review Board at Dominican Hospital to administer an investigational drug. The board consists of a dozen people, including community members, who consider safety and ethics of using something experimental. Members heard

the results with Legalon in Germany were promising. They heard that the patients had signed a form consenting to its use. They too gave their consent.

It seemed worth a try.

That same day, the FDA granted the permission needed. Under FDA regulations, the agency doesn't discuss investigative new drugs but Madaus Pharma confirmed that the approval came swiftly. "Surprisingly he was able to get this within a matter of hours," said Veilleux. "People were asking me, 'What are the chances he'll get permission?' I said, one in 1,000"

Increasing the odds

While Mitchell was pursuing the German medication, Knapp was doing her best to advocate for her patients. Like Mitchell, she is a "hospitalist" specializing in the care of hospital inpatients. At 42, she has been a doctor for 10 years. She also is a mom with one child. She called the Poison Control Center, which located a one-day supply of injectable milk thistle at a compounding pharmacy in New Jersey. Unlike Madaus, the company was not willing to donate its product. Carl Washburn, the pharmacist at Dominican Hospital, put the order on his personal credit card with the blessing of the new president, Dr. Nanette Mickiewicz.

Everyone hoped it would arrive in time.

By Wednesday evening, some of the patients were much sicker. If any of them suffered liver failure, a liver transplant would be their only chance to survive. Those operations are done only at institutions with transplant specialists, not at general hospitals like Dominican. Knapp got on the phone, calling to find a medical center where a doctor would accept the patients — not an easy task. Often when multiple patients require treatment, they are divided among hospitals so as not to overwhelm a single institution. She found Dr. Robert Gish at the Transplantation Center at California Pacific Medical Center. When Gish agreed to take all six patients and to use Legalon, even though it was experimental, the two doctors at Dominican felt a sense of relief. If any hospital could increase the odds for the family in Santa Cruz, it was Pacific Medical. It was a place with liver experts and facilities for liver transplants. Another doctor, Maurizio Bonacini, had treated 17 mushroom poisoning cases in four years. In eight of those cases, people who were severely ill recovered without needing a liver transplant. The quicker the treatment, the better the outcome, Bonacini found. He had co-authored a paper on the subject for the American Gastroenterological Association.

But there weren't enough beds for all six. Five patients were taken to San Francisco, and one stayed behind in Santa Cruz. Mitchell got on the phone to Veilleux at Madaus asking him to reroute the medication to San Francisco.

Another roadblock

By the time the FDA had given its OK to administer Legalon, it was too late in Germany for Madaus to ship the medication by FedEx. So Veilleux arranged for a personal courier to pick up the product and board a plane early Thursday morning to San Francisco. The antidote fit into a box about the size of four shoe boxes. The plane ticket

(Continued on page 8)

(Continued from page 7)

cost 3,600 Euros — about \$5,000. Veilleux didn't want to wait until the next morning for the FedEx office to open. "Every hour could mean something," he said.

Mitchell is astonished by how much cooperation he got. "Everyone grasped the gravity of the situation and worked to cut red tape," he said. He didn't realize there was still red tape ahead. On Thursday morning, Mitchell called for an ambulance to take the last patient to San Francisco. None was available.

Shortly after 2 p.m., Mitchell got more bad news: Highway 17 was closed. An armored truck had crashed, closing the northbound lanes. The backup was immense. Mitchell looked into helicopter transport. Too windy. That left one option: Highway 1. An ambulance departed at 5 p.m. Thursday, carrying the patient and the one-day supply of injectable milk thistle to San Francisco. Its lights were flashing and sirens sounding.

Recovery

In San Francisco, the treatment included the Legalon milk thistle delivered by courier and three other medications: the antidote for an overdose of Tylenol, penicillin and activated charcoal. Some of the patients didn't receive any penicillin because of allergies. Two of the six patients got well very quickly. Bonacini, who took over their care a week ago Friday, said he felt they could have recovered just as well at Dominican. But it appeared one patient, the 29-year-old man, would need a liver transplant. Doctors looked for donor organs and even got offers. Bonacini reserved the Legalon for the two sickest patients, the 29-year-old and the eldest. The eldest was not a good candidate for a liver transplant because of her age. She was 83, and 70 is "about

the limit," according to Bonacini.

Two more patients were released Wednesday. By Thursday, the 29-year-old had improved enough to go home. The matriarch of the family, the eldest patient, died that same day. The poison moved from her liver to her kidney, the organ that makes urine and discharges waste from the body. Ironically, her liver appeared to recover at the same time her kidneys failed.

The hospitals have not released the names of the family members because of the federal laws on patient privacy. "I'm humbled by a poison as powerful as amatoxin," Mitchell said.

A first

Mitchell learned Friday that these patients from Aptos were the first in America to be treated with intravenous milk thistle extract for mushroom poisoning. "We took a path not previously blazed," he said. He and his physician colleague, Wendy Knapp, are sad that one patient died, but elated to have five survive — and be spared a liver transplant. The experience may pave the way for broader changes. "We're going to work closely with the Poison Control Center, Madaus and the FDA to allow us to maintain a supply of this medicine in Northern California so it's available to be used within 12-24 hours," Mitchell said. If intravenous milk thistle is more readily accessible, doctors can gather more data on its effectiveness.

"At the end of the day, we can't say whether it was the silymarin or dumb luck," Mitchell said. "But we can say folks at Dominican Hospital know how to pull together in a crisis, and when that happens, extraordinary things can happen"

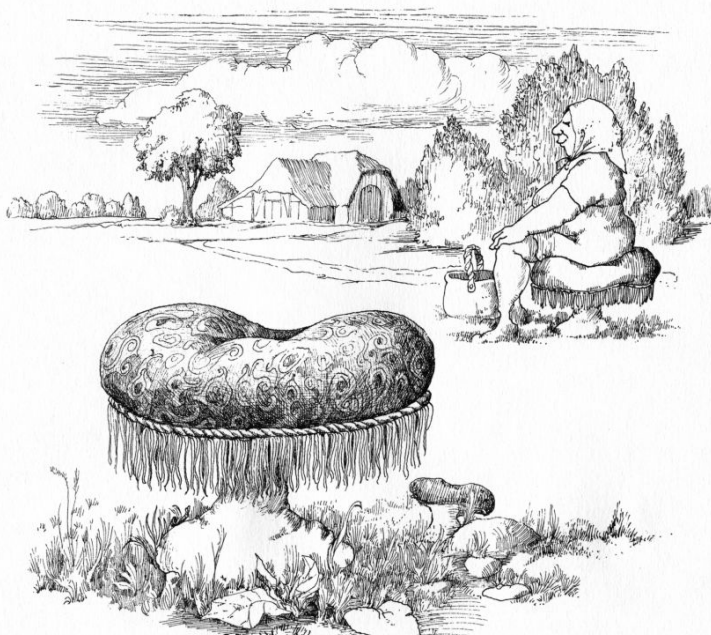
Contact Jondi Gumz at jgumz@santacruzsentinel.com



Plushstool

Paxillus holosericus

Eighteen inches high, 24 in diameter. Provides a natural way to relax and unwind after a tense day in the fields. Plush, plump and palatial, this heavenly hassock will accommodate even the amplest of posteriors. Indigenous to the Breastwolds, the Plushstool is a real hit with the larger local peasantry. They have even named their "Plushstool Polka" after this fabulous fungus.



Halbritter;'s Plant-and-Animal World

SOMA Membership Application and Renewal Form

Regardless of what others may think of me, I wish to become a member of the Sonoma County Mycological Association, a Non-Profit Corporation dedicated to the promotion of the knowledge and appreciation of local fungi.



(Please Print) New Member Renewal
Name: _____
Address: _____
City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____
Phone(s): Home: _____ Cell: _____
E-mail: _____

SOMA will not share your info!
Date: _____

- \$25 for family membership (mailed SOMA News, plus website download if desired)
- \$20 for family membership who do not require a mailed newsletter (website download only)
- \$20 for seniors with mailed newsletter (60 years +) (plus website download if desired)
- \$20 for seniors—website download only, (help SOMA and the environment out!)
- Check here if website download is desired. Include your email address!

I am interested in participating in the following activities (Check):

Culinary Group ____ Mushroom Forays ____ Cultivation ____
Mushroom Dyes ____ Mushroom Papermaking ____ Newsletter ____

Other ideas/comments: _____

Checks to: **SOMA**
 P.O. Box 7147
 Santa Rosa, CA 95407
www.SOMAmushrooms.org

YOU CAN NOW RENEW/JOIN ONLINE AT THE WEBSITE!

ANNOUNCEMENTS

VOLUNTEER CORNER

Board experience = Mushroom knowledge

Okay, every year around this time some member of SOMA's Board of Directors makes a statement at the monthly meeting or writes a pleading announcement in the Newsletter that, after several years on the Board, a couple people are resigning! (gasp!) This is usually followed by some hand-wringing and more pleading for volunteers to step forward. Well, it's time to let you in on some inside information.

The Board of Directors is not a very appropriate name for the group that plans all the fun. But to be a legal non-profit, the State refers to this assemblage as such. A better description of the so called "Board" would be a gathering of the most mushroom oriented, energetic, knowledge-based, and fun among us. There, the secret is out. If you think you are interested in mushrooms but have not considered hangin' with the Board....you're not getting it. We meet once a month for two hours and spend most of the year planning a big party called Wild Mushroom Camp. Can you do that? SOMA has never been stronger. We are offering more money for scholarships than ever before. Things are good.

So, okay, it's a commitment of sorts. You have to show up. You have to participate. But aren't you doing that already? Come on. Jump your mycological knowledge several percentiles and impress your friends more than you do already. There will be two or three opportunities on the Board for next year. There will also be more positions of responsibility for Camp. Contact any Board member if you are interested. Now you know.

-Bill Wolpert

Deadline for the April 2008 issue of SOMA News is March 23rd.

Please send your articles, calendar items, and other information to:

SOMAnewseditor@SOMAmushrooms.org

Offering your help at SOMA events ensures that the club will continue to thrive for many years to come.

There are many ways to get involved: SOMA Camp, Culinary Group, Cultivation Club, Forays, and more.

Contact a SOMA Board member if you would like to offer your services.

Thanks to those that came to Salt Point and helped clean up. Your help and enthusiasm were greatly appreciated.

We are currently looking for new members of the Board. Think about joining or nominating someone you know.

Julie Schreiber - Volunteer Coordinator

julieschreiber@hotmail.com

707-473-9766

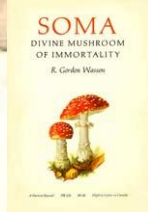


One last great Hubble photo that did not make the top 10 list:

"The Eye of God"

SOMA News

P.O. Box 7147
Santa Rosa, CA 95407



SOMA Members

The March Issue of
SOMA News has arrived!

SOMA usually meets on the third Thursday of the month throughout the year (September through May), at 7 PM, at the Sonoma County Farm Bureau, 970 Piner Road, Santa Rosa, California.

Fungi are displayed at 7 PM, and speakers begin at 7:45 PM. Bring in your baffling fungi to be identified!

Directions to the Sonoma County Farm Bureau

Coming from the south

- Go north on Highway 101.
- Past Steele Lane, take the Bicentennial Way exit.
- Go over Highway 101.
- Turn right on Range Ave.
- Turn left on Piner Road.
- At about ¼ mile, turn left into parking lot at 970 Piner Road.

Coming from the north

- Go south on Highway 101.
- Take the first Santa Rosa exit, Hopper Ave/Mendocino Ave.
- Stay left on the frontage road, (it becomes Cleveland Ave after you cross Industrial Drive).
- Turn right on Piner Road.
- At about ¼ mile, turn left into parking lot at 970 Piner Road.

970 Piner Road is marked by a star on the map at right.

