



SOMA News

VOLUME 21 ISSUE 2

October 2008

SOMA IS AN EDUCATIONAL ORGANIZATION DEDICATED TO MYCOLOGY.
WE ENCOURAGE ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS BY SHARING OUR ENTHUSIASM
THROUGH PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AND GUIDED FORAYS.

2008/2009 SEASON CALENDAR

October

Oct. 16th » Meeting—7pm

Sonoma County Farm Bureau

Speaker: **Dimitar Bochantev**

Foray—October 18th Salt Point

November

Nov. 20th » Meeting—7pm

Sonoma County Farm Bureau

Speaker: **Glenn Shepard Jr.**

December

Dec. 12th »

Sonoma County Farm Bureau

The fabled Mid-winter

Mushroom Potluck Feast

January

Jan. 17th—19th »

The Mushroom event of the year or any year:

**THE 12TH ANNUAL
SOMA WILD MUSHROOM CAMP**



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

Dimitar Bojantchev

Thursday—10/16—7PM—Farm Bureau

Sierra Nevada -- Fungal Diversity along the roads less travelled.



The Sierra Nevada massif represents a framework of diverse ecology and meteorology that supports many rare and poorly described families of fungi. Depending on elevation and landscape features, mushrooms can be collected nearly year-round. In many respects Sierra Nevada represents several distinct mountains molded into one. Knowing when and where to collect requires a good understanding of these factors. In this discussion we will explore Sierra Nevada from a fungal perspective, discuss places and seasons and of course, share some pictures.

Dimitar has a Computer Science degree and has been a Technology Consultant for many Fortune 500 companies. Recently he found his true love of discovery through photographing and investigating the California fungal flora. He regularly collects in European habitats as well and has a broad exposure to many of the original species concepts. He is the creator of the MushroomHobby.Com website, featuring pictures of more than 700 species (soon to be 800+). His true passion lays with the rarely pictured species, as well the intense study of the forbidding and poorly developed genera such as Cortinarius and Inocybe.

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SOMA's *Amanita muscaria* logo by Ariel Mahon

PRESIDENT'S LETTER

Dispatch from the duff Greetings to all!

Our activities in September helped to carry us through the "dry" season of mushrooms, at least until the rains arrive. David Rust's talk on Sudden Oak Death Syndrome (or SOD for the abbreviators) was well done. Very informative, especially as David discussed work that was completed in the last few years to better understand and develop a possible cure for this very destructive disease. It remains a significant problem for Sonoma County.

Saturday's Foray began with SOMA (about 25 strong) participating in the county wide Coastal Pickup Day. We hiked south, along Highway 1 from the northern park boundary to Fisk Cove spying various objects that didn't belong, including a used tire and a few dead critters. The animals were not disturbed and left in place. About 6-8 large orange bags were filled with our collection of the various objects. Some of which we weren't sure we wanted to touch but nothing was left and the park was a bit cleaner. I later heard 550-600 people participated county wide and collected over 2000 pounds of debris. State wide 60,000 or more Californians collected more than a million pounds of trash. It's probably only a dent in the pile but, at least, the beaches look better to our eyes.

Before the pick-up began we met with the Salt Point Park Rangers. They expressed their appreciation for helping out and outlined the area we should clean. The lead ranger mentioned an organization many of you have heard about, The Sonoma County Trails Council. The group was active last June repairing and improving a number of trails in SPSP to all our benefit. The Council has several other programs that could be of interest to many people. Please see their website and Summer Newsletter. Please get involved if you have the interest and time.

<http://www.sonomacountytrails.org/>

Best regards,

-Jim Wheeler

SEPTEMBER FORAY REPORT

We have been blessed with the usual fine autumn weather we all love and expect in Sonoma County, and the foray in September was no exception. Gorgeous skies, an ocean turbulent enough to avert abalone divers, mild breezes and t-shirt temperatures greeted the crowd of stalwart members and newcomers who made the trek to Salt Point. The day started with participation in the Coastal clean-up as president Jim describes above and then proceeded to foraying for our elusive fungi. Following the foray, SOMA members were fortunate to enjoy the usual sumptuous pot-luck feast. Our generous mycochef, Patrick Hamilton, provided Fettucini Alfredo for all as well as several outstanding wines. These offerings complemented the other great dishes brought by all including an amazing baked squash dish prepared by foray leader, Ben Schmid. MUSHROOMS? Did I mention we forayed? This was an exercise in futility in the desert that is the Sonoma coast at present. One Sulfur tuft, and a handful of Chanterelles were the only edibles found among only a few other species.

RAIN DANCES REQUIRED FOR OCTOBER!

-Editor

FORAY OF THE MONTH

Saturday, October 18th

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 Ben Schmid at (707) 575-4778 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!

Alaskan Dye-Ventures – Part I

Nothing, no NOTHING - - no photos, no books, no movies could have prepared me for The Alaska Experience! My sweet flight on Horizon Air out of Santa Rosa to Seattle, and then Alaska Air to Anchorage was all shrouded in heavy clouds the entire way. Sliding down into Anchorage out of the overcast was the first clue that there were some serious mountains below – The Chugach Range – they had to spanned before spiraling down into and then lifting out of Anchorage on an Era Air puddle-jumper, (thank heavens for earplugs!) before dropping out of the clouds into Cordova. And then I saw them ~ the Glaciers, - massive rivers of ice grinding down out of the mountains to end most spectacularly as the intricately laced and braided rivers, and muskeg deltas of the Copper River Delta. I think I went around that first day with my mouth permanently dropped open in amazement – at the unbelievable snow-patched mountains rising straight up out of the Prince William Sound (remember the Exxon Valdez?) and the Delta, the thick moss and lichen-choked deep spruce forests (dreams of Dermocybes dancing through her head...) My welcoming hosts, Susanna and Allen Marquette live high on a mountainside overlooking the fishing community of Cordova. – I had vowed to eat salmon or halibut every day, and I did.

Those first few days we went “into the bush” each morning and afternoon. My rubber rain-boots proved to be worth every pound in my suitcase, as that was the dress of the day – anywhere and everywhere, morning to night whether fishing or at a funeral – brown rain-boots are the badge of being a Cordovan – of course, mine were black with blue rims – so immediately I was pegged as being from the lower 48. Boots and rain-paints, for this was the Chugach Rain Forest which meant that I was perspiring heavily down the back of my neck while rain poured down my forehead! We collected mushrooms with the right hand, and blueberries, salmon berries, cranberries, nagoom berries with the left hand – one carried 2 baskets if one was smart.....”bear bells” jangling on our packs, because this was the salmon spawning time, and the rivers and streams were choked with salmon flailing their way upstream, spawning and dying. Bear evidence was everywhere – we collected in loud and noisy groups – no sneaking quietly and hunched over through the blueberries here – you never knew when a brownie might want a change of diet from fish to meat! And to judge from the scat, berries were definitely the dessert of choice....

The 2nd Annual Cordova Fungus Festival, to which I was invited to teach a workshop in mushroom dyes, was organized by a group of amateur mycologists from all walks of life, from fishermen and their wives, to US Forest Service personnel, Prince William Sound Science Center scientists, shopkeepers, and just plain folks. They do not have any “formal” mushroom club, just an intense interest and focus on fungi. The US Forest Service offices provided space to display mushrooms, with microscopes at our disposal, all of Cordova seemed to be involved in this affair – every business had a poster in the window, fishermen and forest service folk were wearing Mushroom Fair T-shirts... everywhere the enthusiasm was palpable and contagious.

They brought in Steve Trudell from WA, (an old friend to SOMA) to be the “lead mycologist”, but we also had local lichenologists and dendrologists on hand – courtesy of the Forest Service, several members of whom are also avid dyers and knitters, including Erin Cooper a field biologist with the Forest Service a key organizer of the Festival and the dye workshops, along with Dottie Widmann, the owner of the most incredible fiber arts store I have ever been in – “The Net Loft” (– her husband is a fisherman, and the first yarn shop was literally in a net loft!)

Every morning we would gather at The Net Loft to set out on dye mushroom forays – Dermocybes with orange and yellow gills, fragrant *Hydnellum suaveolans*, *Hydnellum peckii*, *Phaeolus schweinitzii* (is this starting to sound familiar?) By the time the actual workshop rolled around we had a good collection of dye fungi, along with a change of weather that included cold horizontal rain right off of Prince William Sound! But we were undercover for the most part and certainly had no shortage of fresh pH5 rain water. I had taken up some of the *D. semi-*

sanguinea, that Anna Moore had collected for me in Oregon, (thank you, Anna!) just to entice the Cordovans to look harder for those red-gilled Dermocybes – and sure enough they have started to find them, (as soon as I left Cordova!) We also used lichens (*Lobaria oregana* and *Letharia vulpina*) for dark brown and acid yellow-green dyes. I receive daily letters from the Cordovan dyers who continue their quests and experiments – and I am going to put up an Alaskan

page on the Mushroom Dye website, www.mushroomsforcolor.com showing the resulting samples and photos, not only for Cordova but also for Petersburg – which will have to come later.

The Cordova (and Petersburg) dyers had come up with the most innovative dye arrangement I have ever seen, and want to try at the next SOMA Camp. Instead of using lots of little pots and pans on burners for small amounts of mushrooms – say if you have only a handful or two, they put those mushrooms and yarns into wide mouth canning jars filled with hot water, and then put the canning jars into the big canning kettle filled with water to heat on ONE burner and voilà, you can “can” six jars of mushroom dyes at a time! This works really well for small batches of Dermocybes, especially if you are doing separate dyes of caps and stems. They had wooden kabob skewers with little labeled flags on them stuck into each jar (How about that, Tina!!!) The Hydnellums have to be heated and cooked more vigorously to get good dye color, though, so we just used the big pots for them – achieving a light blue-green from *H. suaveolans*, which I describe as the color of “glacial ice melt-water”, and a lovely mauve from *H. peckii*. Unfortunately we don’t have the fragrant *H. suaveolans* around here – it likes spruce habitat. Please go to <http://www.mushroomsforcolor.com/CordovaMushroomDyes.htm> to see the Cordova dye results in living color!

Stay tuned for Part II – Mushroom Dyes in Petersburg on the Inside Passage!





October 2008

It's when the late summer sun starts staying lower in the southern sky and shadows are caused to lengthen on the ground that my seasonal sensations say, "To the mountains, go!"

The birds at the feeders are a bit different now. The tomato vines are looking skimpy and the pumpkins are fattening. Chiles are bright red. Leaves are getting all colored too.

"Have there been any thunderstorms in the Sierras," one wonders while checking the Internet weather info. And just how much rain is necessary to bring up the fabled fall mountain (great tasting) boletes under the lodgepoles? (Seems that it has been years since a really good fruiting.)

"Suppose there are chanterelles out at our coast yet?," the same wonderer wonders, and the answer is, "Not many." Oregon and Washington were producing lots but it is very dry there now and fruiting is "freakish" according to a commercial source. Matsutakes are not making much of a showing either up there but lobster mushrooms are doing well (they seem to do fine in dry weather).

There are things we can do in the summer while waiting for our season to start and which can bring an almost year around fungal funfest. You just can't do them around here—you must travel to where the mushrooms are.

And Mexico has a bunch. Your forager was able to go again recently to a truly magical place—up in the cloud forests of the State of Hidalgo at nearly 10,000 feet for almost two weeks looking for mushrooms with friends and local University mycologists. And we get to do important things.

One of the most pleasing aspects of what we love doing is that we really can add to the science of mycology by pursuing our hobby (obsession?). I mean, can amateur chemists make discoveries that enter into textbooks? How about a recreational physicist realizing a new Quantum or String Theory? Probably not. But we do, and can often, add to herbariums and to the body of knowledge of fungus.

Down there in Hidalgo (and Tlaxcala) we found over 350 species. That's a lot and we were told then by the scientists that maybe 30 were not "described." Not yet "discovered" by mycologists, in those areas. Very cool.

"Cloud Forests" we don't have here. Imagine way high up in the mountains with low clouds everyday, rain everyday, mushrooms abounding. Giant moths, spider mites that bite and bite and bite, strange birds (they chirp in Spanish), snakes, lots of delicious slime molds (one of our mycologists is a specialist with those, ah, slimy things). Over 50 species of Boletus and over 40 of Amanitas. Mature bright orange chanterelles smaller than a 1/8" in the cap but not as long and larger cibarius growing in fields of obsidian deposits. Indigo blue Lactarius too. Nice.

Back here in our Northern California world we have the upcoming season to look forward to and to dream on.

Do any of you folks get those recurring mushroom style dreams stuck inside the recesses of your brains and that start to show up about now? The ones where a shrump is truly a shrump until you get up on it and then it is a shrump all right—but a *Russula brevipes* shrump instead of a porcini. Used to hate that dream but it rarely gets a rerun now that my eyes can sort out the foolers from several feet away.

Speaking of "foolers" the best ones are when it is morel time—especially in a burn. Charred root bits sticking out of the ground, little ponderosa or Doug-fir cones looking just like morels from 10 feet away. And some from 5 or fewer feet away. And then some that you actually bend over to pick and then have to issue a, "Ha!" Don't you hate that?

There were some thoughts once that a calendar of "foolers" would be a good idea. Each month a photo of a great one. Went into the "bad idea" file. Kind of like making a SOMA cookbook. Just how many would be bought?

Thinking of cooking, how about a recipe that should be in a cookbook but isn't because it's not. We made it up (as usual) for SOMA Camp last January.

CLIP & SAVE 

Carrot and Chanterelle Compote

Serving Size: 6 Preparation Time: 0:45

| Amt./Meas. | Ingredient | Preparation Method |
|------------|------------------------|--------------------|
| 2 ea | shallots | minced |
| ½ tsp | sea salt | |
| 6 med | carrots | chopped large |
| 1 ea | russet potato | quartered |
| 4 oz | chanterelle mushrooms | diced |
| | olive oil | |
| 1/8 cup | orange juice, fresh | |
| 3 tbsp | lemon juice, fresh | |
| 3 tbsp | extra virgin olive oil | |
| | sea salt | |
| 1 ¼ tsp | coriander seed | toasted/ground |
| 1 tbsp | tarragon | minced |
| 1 tbsp | orange juice, fresh | |



1. Mash the shallots (or process) with the salt and set aside.
2. Sauté the chanterelles in some olive oil and cook with the orange juice au sec (until just dry). Set aside.
3. Boil the carrots and potato with some salt until soft (about 25 minutes). Drain in a colander and press out any excess moisture. Transfer to a bowl and mash together. Beat it well and stir in the lemon juice, olive oil (not too much--do it gradually), chanterelles, shallot paste, orange juice, coriander and tarragon. Mix well and check the seasonings.

Do mushrooms grow under water???

By Paul Fattig

Mail Tribune

November 20, 2007—SHADY COVE

Hydrologist Robert Coffan knew he was looking at something very unusual in the knee-deep summer waters of the upper Rogue River.

Here were gilled mushrooms, swaying in the main current of the clear, cold river in early July through late September.

"But since gilled mushrooms DO NOT live and grow underwater, I was real nervous" about approaching a mycological expert, admitted the adjunct professor at Southern Oregon University.

Indeed, Darlene Southworth, a retired SOU biology professor, was plenty skeptical when he broached the subject. Although she was impressed by underwater photographs taken by Coffan, she wanted to see the evidence firsthand.

Not only did she witness the mushrooms found by Coffan, but she discovered others during an August visit to a stretch of the north fork of the river within a few miles of Woodruff Bridge in the Rogue River-Siskiyou National Forest.

"There are no known gilled mushrooms living underwater," Southworth explained. "And this is not a slime mold or anything like that. These are regular gilled mushrooms."

"We believe this is a new species," she concluded of the mushrooms that are typically about 10 centimeters tall with caps that are about 2 centimeters wide.

The find was unveiled Monday night at the November meeting of the Upper Rogue Watershed Association, for whom Coffan had prepared a water assessment last year.

Dubbed *Psathyrella aquatic*, the mushroom is being introduced to the broader scientific community in a 14-page paper submitted Nov. 9 to the science journal *Mycologia*. The paper was written by Coffan in collaboration with Southworth and Jonathan Frank, a laboratory technician at SOU.

Coffan credits Southworth, who now conducts research under a National Science Foundation grant at the university, for focusing on mycorrhizal fungi, and Frank for the paper and much of the research in determining the mushroom's uniqueness.

Up at Oregon State University, Matt Trappe, a doctoral candidate in forest mycology, says Coffan has found a unique mushroom. He and his father, Jim Trappe, a retired U.S. Forest Service mycologist who now teaches in OSU's botany and plant pathology department, were consulted on the find.

"As far as we've determined, this is a first in Oregon as well as a first in the world," Matt Trappe said of gilled mushrooms living in water. "We're not aware of anything at all like this in mycology where the reproductive mushroom structure appears to be perennially underwater."

"If this evolved in Oregon, what are the odds it can be found in streams and rivers around the world?" he asked. "This raises all kinds of questions about spore disbursement and evolution."

There are more questions than answers at this point, acknowledged Coffan, who originally discovered the water-dwelling gilled mushrooms in summer 2005. None of the mushrooms were found in slack water, he noted.

A DNA analysis at SOU's Bio Tech Center and a cross-check of references and experts, including mycologists at the University of Minnesota, determined the mushrooms belonged to the genus *Psathyrella*, Southworth said. Samples were sent to OSU and to San Francisco State University.

There are about 600 known species of *Psathyrella*, all terrestrial, she said.

"How do we identify them? We look at the morphology — the form,

the shape and the DNA," she said.

It has a small bell-shaped cap, a thin stipe (stem) and gills underneath, she said. They examined the cells in the cap and made a spore print.

Researchers have ruled out the possibility the mushrooms were growing along the banks and were merely submerged by rising waters brought on by snowmelt.

The mushrooms were found in the spring-fed "base" flow of the river, Coffan said, noting that flow is consistent and keeps the mushrooms submerged.

The mushrooms tend to grow on submerged wood but can also be found growing in the gravel, Southworth said.

"These are growing in the same place for three months," she said, adding they have been found as late as Sept. 21.

Although there are some known freshwater aquatic fungi, this is the only known gilled mushroom that grows underwater, she reiterated.

"We noticed there is a gas bubble underwater," she said. "When we pulled the mushroom out, we could hold it up for some seconds before the spore burst. But they would not be uniformly distributed. They would stick to the cap, to the stipe, to Jonathan's fingers."

They don't know what the gas is, she noted.

They are also intrigued by its three-month fruiting season.

"That's way long for mushrooms," she observed.

As for their edibility, Southworth figures the waterborne mushrooms are too small to warrant collecting for food.

However, several of the terrestrial *Psathyrella* are edible, although most have never been tested as a food source, according to her research.

"There is no reason it would go toxic," she observed of a member of the genus growing in water.

Meanwhile, Coffan, Southworth and Frank plan to return to the area to conduct further research to try to determine the extent of the mushroom's habitat. They also want to check out other streams in the region for evidence of the mushrooms.

"But it will be next summer before that is feasible," she said. "Right now we can describe this one river: It's aerated, cold, clear, steady flow. But we want to find out how the spores are dispersed."

"And we want to find out how unique the habitat is," Coffan said. "We have a whole new area to look for mushrooms now. It's mind-boggling."

Reach reporter Paul Fattig at 776-4496 or e-mail him at pfattig@mailtribune.com.



A new species of mushroom, dubbed *Psathyrella aquatic*, has been discovered in the upper Rogue River. Biologists believe this is the first gilled mushroom to be found living underwater in the world. The bubbles on the top of the mushroom are caused by an unknown gas.

Photo courtesy of Robert Coffan

Benefits Seen in Psychedelic Drugs

Survey volunteers tell of health and other benefits

By MALCOLM RITTER—NEW YORK

http://seattlepi.nwsource.com/national/369064_psychedelic01.html

In 2002, at a Johns Hopkins University laboratory, a business consultant named Dede Osborn took a psychedelic drug as part of a research project.

She felt like she was taking off. She saw colors. Then it felt like her heart was ripping open.

But she called the experience joyful as well as painful, and says that it has helped her to this day.

"I feel more centered in who I am and what I'm doing," said Osborn, now 66, of Providence, R.I. "I don't seem to have those self-doubts like I used to have. I feel much more grounded (and feel that) we are all connected."

Scientists reported Tuesday that when they surveyed volunteers 14 months after they took the drug, most said they were still feeling and behaving better because of the experience.

Two-thirds of them also said the drug had produced one of the five most spiritually significant experiences they'd ever had.

The drug, psilocybin, is found in so-called "magic mushrooms." It's illegal, but it has been used in religious ceremonies for centuries.

The study involved 36 men and women during an eight-hour lab visit. It's one of the few such studies of a hallucinogen in the past 40 years, since research was largely shut down after widespread recreational abuse of such drugs in the 1960s.

The project made headlines in 2006 when researchers published their report on how the volunteers felt just two months after taking the drug. The new study followed them up a year after that.

Experts emphasize that people should not try psilocybin on their own because it could be harmful. Even in the controlled setting of the laboratory, nearly a third of participants felt significant fear under the effects of the drug. Without proper supervision, someone could be harmed, researchers said.

Osborn, in a telephone interview, recalled a powerful feeling of being out of control during her lab experience. "It was ... like tak-

ing off, I'm being lifted up," she said. Then came "brilliant colors and beautiful patterns, just stunningly gorgeous, more intense than normal reality."

And then, the sensation that her heart was tearing open.

"It would come in waves," she recalled. "I found myself doing Lame-type breathing as the pain came on."

Yet "it was a joyful, ecstatic thing at the same time, like the joy of being alive," she said. She compared it to birthing pains. "There was this sense of relief and joy and ecstasy when my heart was opened."

With further research, psilocybin (pronounced SILL-oh-SY-bin) may prove useful in helping to treat alcoholism and drug dependence, and in aiding seriously ill patients as they deal with psychological distress, said study lead author Roland Griffiths of Johns Hopkins.

Griffiths also said that despite the spiritual characteristics reported for the drug experiences, the study says nothing about whether God exists.

"Is this God in a pill? Absolutely not," he said.

The experiment was funded in part by the National Institute on Drug Abuse. The results were published online Tuesday by the Journal of Psychopharmacology.

Fourteen months after taking the drug, 64 percent of the volunteers said they still felt at least a moderate increase in well-being or life satisfaction, in terms of things like feeling more creative, self-confident, flexible and optimistic. And 61 percent reported at least a moderate behavior change in what they considered positive ways.

That second question didn't ask for details, but elsewhere the questionnaire answers indicated lasting gains in traits such as being more sensitive, tolerant, loving and compassionate.

Researchers didn't try to corroborate what the participants said about their own behavior. But in the earlier analysis at two months after the drug was given, researchers said family and friends backed up what those in the study said about behavior changes. Griffiths said he has no reason to doubt the answers at 14 months.

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SOMA—What's in a Name

The Soma Question

(C)2007 Donald E. Teeter

<http://www.ambrosiasociety.org/xoops/modules/content/print.php?id=7>

The identity of the original Vedic Soma had been lost for centuries, in its place various plants had been used as Soma substitutes in the modern version of the Soma Ceremony. Plants such as Ephedra containing Ephedrine an amphetamine, is still used as the most common Soma substitute in India. Yet the identity of the original Vedic Soma was a question of the most vital importance for those studying the earliest Vedas. For two centuries western researchers have been trying to identify the original Vedic Soma "Plant" their research became a quest to answer the Soma Question.

It was Mr. Wasson who first proposed that the common forest mushroom *Amanita muscaria* was the actual Vedic Soma, a sacred "immortal" "plant" bearing no leaves, blossoms, roots, fruit or seeds, which was turned into a sacred drink bearing the same name in the Soma ceremony. This identification of *Amanita muscaria* as the lost original Soma was quickly accepted by many

Scholars and Ethnobotanists due to the over whelming amount of evidence presented by Wasson.

Yet there seemed to be a major flaw in Wasson's theory that *Amanita muscaria* was the original Soma, in that was that he was never able to produce the psychoactive effects described in the Rig Veda by consuming fresh *Amanita muscaria* mushrooms or juice pressed from the same. Then the claim was made that the mushrooms had to be dried before using and then re-hydrated before the pressing; a process which is mentioned in the Rig Veda. Drying the *Amanita muscaria* mushrooms and then making a water extract did yield a far superior drink compared to the juice of fresh mushrooms but many researchers were still disappointed with the results. Some researchers claimed that *Amanita muscaria* could not be the original Soma since even dried it did not produce all the psychoactive effects of the original Soma. These researchers then began to seek out other possible plants and fungi as candidates for the original Soma.

I believe that *Amanita muscaria* is the original Vedic Soma and that the discrepancy between the stated effects of Soma in the Rig Veda and those produced by dried *Amanita muscaria*, water

(Continued on page 7)

extracted to produce a drink, are caused by an inaccurate understanding of the processes described in the Rig Veda about Soma and the Soma Ceremony. This misunderstanding is caused by modern people, who do not understand the implications of the term "immortal" when applied to the Soma plant, and that this modern lack of knowledge in the proper way to handle *Amanita muscaria* is the cause of the discrepancy. Modern western man has a tendency to focus on the "plants" used by Shamans worldwide and tends to ignore the "processes" used by these same people on these plants. Now many Shamanic plants are not active or even usable in their natural state and may require extensive processing before being used. In the case of the South American Ayawasca brew, different species of plants containing different chemical compounds must be combined in certain proportions and then processed in a certain way or the resulting brew is worthless or worse even toxic.

Soma Pavamanna

In all the Hymns of the 9th book of the Rig Veda, Soma is called Soma Pavamanna as an official title. Soma is "the pressed one" while Pavamanna means "self purifying" so the title literally means "the pressed one, self purifying." Now the concept of "self purifying" as applied to Soma automatically implies several things; first that the Soma Nature provided is somehow "impure" and must be purified before being used. Second that Soma is the active agent in its own purification during the process of the Soma Ceremony as described in the Hymns of Rig Veda book 9.

To begin we will look at the process described in the Rig Veda.

1. Dried *Amanita muscaria* mushrooms are re-hydrated in a small bowl by sprinkling them with water or soaking them in a small amount of water (both methods seemed to be used).

2. After proper re-hydration the mushrooms are pressed to recover the Soma Juice using "fingers" "wooden boards" or pressing "stones" which correspond to the first, second and third pressing of the mushrooms, as the same Soma plants were re-hydrated and pressed three times in one day. The expressed juice was caught in a small bowl for the next stage of the process.

3. The resulting juice was poured on to the high end of a wooden trough a few feet long, set at a shallow angle lined with the "eternal fleece". The purpose of this is to filter the particles of Soma plant from the Soma juice. When dried *Amanita muscaria* is re-hydrated, in three days or less it displays its Immortality as it "calls forth the out spun thread" and grows mycelium that greatly resembles Sheep Wool and that this Soma created "wool" is the "eternal fleece" used to filter the Soma juice; thus the meaning of the Rig Veda Title Pavamanna "self purifying". It must be remembered that not only is the mushroom "immortal" but also that every drop of the Soma juice is capable of coming back to life in three days and creating its own out spun threads, so any new wooden or terracotta vessel used to hold the Soma juice will be alive with woolly mycelium in a few days.

4. The now purified juice fell into a large wooden vat sitting at the end of the filtering trough, that was also growing the eternal fleece from previous use, into this vat a cooled previously cooked mixture of barley, water, milk, and honey was added to the small amount of Soma juice in the vat. (This is one of three recipes I decoded from the Rig Veda; the Eternal fleece loves its food, "Soma grows great with food") Note; it is unclear if the strained cooked barley water brew was also poured on the filtering trough or simply poured into the wooden vat.

5. After a certain time had passed during which specific Hymns were sung, the Soma was dipped out of the large vat using wooden ladles coated with the eternal fleece, into wooden or terracotta pitchers also growing the eternal fleece. The Soma was then poured into the individual wooden or terracotta cups of the

Soma ceremony participants. Now, if the cup had been used to drink Soma previously it too, would be lined with the eternal fleece.

6. Each contact of the Soma juice with the eternal fleece living in the different vessels used in the process would greatly increase the strength of the Soma drink. The resulting Soma in a cup is orders of magnitude stronger than the undiluted original juice pressed from the re-hydrated *Amanita muscaria* mushrooms.

7. Not only is the self purified Soma far stronger than the original dried mushroom juice, it has different qualities compared to the original juice which seems somewhat toxic to many people producing nausea, stomach upset, sweating. The Soma drink self purified with its own eternal fleece produces a smooth experience generating almost no negative physical symptoms and a higher quality spiritual experience.

8. It is the magical process of the Soma ceremony that creates something unattainable directly from Nature. The Soma ceremony is a glorious transmutation process in which Nature's gift of the *Amanita muscaria* mushroom is multiplied, strengthened, and self purified. The presence of the Living Vessels growing the Eternal Fleece are very important factors in the original Soma ceremony, which all previous researchers into the Soma Question have missed entirely.

There is still debate as to whether the Eternal fleece is a form of the mycelium of *Amanita muscaria* that outwardly resembles a simpler fungus. Or; if it is a simple fungus such as a "Mucor" species that is intimately associated only with *Amanita muscaria* and perhaps *Amanita pantherina*. As far as the Soma Question is concerned it doesn't make any difference what modern science finally says the eternal fleece is. The only important point is that the ancient Sages and Seers who composed the Rig Veda obviously knew the "Eternal fleece" and used it as an integral and very important part of the whole Soma ceremony. However; it must be pointed out that these same Seers and Sages believed that the eternal fleece was indeed a form of *Amanita muscaria*, thus their multitude of references to Soma as "Immortal." As one of the few modern people who have tasted the products created with this Eternal fleece, and tasted the dried Eternal fleece itself, I have to completely agree with this extremely ancient belief.

In conclusion *Amanita muscaria* is the original Vedic Soma and the differences between the dried mushrooms re-hydrated and then juiced and the Vedic Soma are due to a modern misconception of the process of the Soma ceremony and until now our complete ignorance of the importance of the Eternal Fleece and the Living vessels in the "self purification" of Soma. That the original Vedic Soma could not be any other "plant" is also proven by the facts that Soma is "Immortal" that it "calls forth the out spun thread" and generates the "Eternal Fleece" all things that dried *Amanita muscaria* mushrooms do with ease when re-hydrated, and which all the other "plant" candidates proposed as the original Vedic Soma cannot do at all.

Donald E. Teeter

A few Rig Veda references:

The "Eternal fleece" Rig Veda 9-1-6

Soma as "Immortal God" Rig Veda 9-3-1

"Thou callest forth the out spun thread" Rig Veda 9-22-7

"Eternal Pavamana" Rig Veda 9-78-3

"born Immortal" Rig Veda 9-108-12

"Purified in his fleecy garb" Rig Veda 9-16-6

"living drops" Rig Veda 9-64-17

"the Everlasting One" Rig Veda 9-72-6

"it's threads are standing separate, glittering with light" Rig Veda 9-83-2

"Immortal Soma" Rig Veda 9-84-2

See "The resurrection of *Amanita muscaria*", time lapse video at Youtube.com

Here is a nice note and some remarkable photos from Britt Bunyard, publisher and editor of [Fungi Magazine](#):

Tom and Rod:

I enjoyed the latest SOMA newsletter...and especially Rod's comments on things muscariacious (muscariosities?) in Mexico. Of course, I too have lots of xmas mushroom ornaments but was stunned to see the wedding cake (attached) that was wheeled out at the Denver Botanic Garden just a few weeks ago. Following the CO Myco Soc's Mushroom Fair (which I participated in), the Garden was to be closed for a private wedding...obviously between two mycophiles!

Best wishes,
Britt



Our Fungal Friend

In the dry, dry dust of late August
Under the crispy leaves of the live oak trees
Surely they reappear - in about the same place as last year
The Earth bulges first, and then it bursts
The emerging fructification causes consternation
Is it s**t? If not, then what is it?
First fungal fruiting of the year, now that rain is almost here
Yielding colors bright and glorious - the trusty, crusty *P. tinctorius*

-by Tina Wistrom



Dorothy Beebee

ANNOUNCEMENTS

LIFETIME MEMBERSHIPS!!

Yes, you can now become a lifetime member of SOMA and avoid all the pesky details of annual subscription. For a mere \$250, you can opt to never pay membership dues again! Your membership will include all the benefits of membership including subscription to the great website download version of this rag. Lifetime membership elevates you to the level of SOMA Patron where you may experience visions as outlined in the articles *SOMA—What's in a Name* and *Benefits Seen in Psychedelic Drugs* from this issue. Be one of the first to support SOMA this way and help the club prosper. <http://www.somamushrooms.org/membership/membapp.html>

-Editor

David Arora's Annual Mendocino Mushroom Foray. Nov. 28-30, 2008. Join David Arora and special guests for a weekend of mushroom hunting, feasting, lectures and workshops. Anthropologists and ethnomycologists recently published in the fall mushroom issue of *Economic Botany* will speak about mushroom hunting in different countries as well as locally. Begins the day after Thanksgiving. \$200 per person includes lodging and most meals (\$165 without lodging). To register, contact maxfun@cruzio.com or call (707) 884-3457.

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, 501 (c)(3), 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!)
- ☐ \$250 for Lifetime Membership with website download!

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!

MORE ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Wild About Mushrooms Company has openings available for our 2 upcoming Oregon forays:

Annual 'Oregon Cascades Foray' scheduled for October 12 thru 16, and new 'Oregon Coast Foray' scheduled for the weekend of October 18/19. Both forays are to be led by David Campbell. Educational and enjoyable! Contact Charmoon Richardson for event information and registration at (707) 829-2063, or charmoon@sonic.net.

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Breitenbush Hot Springs Mushroom Weekend: October 23-26: The 2008 Mushroom Conference at Breitenbush Hot Springs Resort near Detroit, Oregon will feature the many uses of mushrooms for humans and the earth. Our expert mycologists will teach you to positively identify the mushrooms and our chefs will demonstrate how to prepare our delectable forest and field fungi. Dr Tom Volk, Paul Stamets and Daniel Winkler will teach and enlighten you about how mushrooms can save the world and the new functions that we have discovered for our fungus friends. Mushroom feasting will be directed by Chef Michael Blackwell at an Interactive Cooking and Tasting event. Paul Kroeger will serve as our conference mycologist and expert identifier of our Pacific Northwest fungi. Mushroom Illustrator and mushrooms for color expert Dorothy Beebe will provide a workshop experience that you will never forget. <http://www.breitenbush.com/>

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October 26, 2008

Event Title: The Vancouver Mycological Society's MUSHROOM SHOW

Date: Sunday October 26, 2008

Time: 11am – 4pm

Location: Vandusen Botanical Garden, Floral Hall, West 37th and Oak Street, Vancouver, B.C. Canada

Details: Mushrooms are Everywhere! The show provides displays of identified mushrooms and other fungi, with their edible, poisonous or dubious status. Also we have displays, speakers, slide shows, books and roving experts on cultivation, preservation, gourmet cooking, medicinal use, hunting, ecology, and cultural use. Bring your own specimens for identification!

Contact: info@vanmyco.com, www.vanmyco.com, 604-878-9878 (recorded information)

Price/Other: Admission \$3.00, children under 12 free. Wheelchair accessible. Parking free.

**Deadline for the November 2008
issue of SOMA News is October 25th.
Please send your articles, calendar
items, and other information to:
SOMAnewseditor@SOMAmushrooms.org**

VOLUNTEER

As a solely volunteer run organization we rely heavily on people to keep this group functioning. Please consider volunteering in some capacity this year. You can be of great help at the Mushroom Camp in January or some other type of event. Please contact me or another board member if you want to become more involved.

Julie

Julie Schreiber

Volunteer coordinator

julieschreiber@hotmail.com

H: 707 473-9766

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|---------------------------|--|-------------------------|
| | | SOMA CAMP - 2009 |
| FORAYS | January 17 - 19, 2009 | |
| WORKSHOPS | Presented by the Sonoma County Mycological Society | |
| GUEST SPEAKERS | www.somamushrooms.org | |

Photo © Martin D. Beebe

SOMA News

P.O. Box 7147
Santa Rosa, CA 95407

SOMA
DIVINE MUSHROOM
OF IMMORTALITY
R. Gordon Wilson

SOMA Members

The October 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.

