



# SOMANEWS

VOLUME 27 : 8

April 2015

## **SPEAKER OF THE MONTH:** *Sydney Glassman*

### **“Ectomycorrhizal Fungal Spore Bank Recovery After a Severe Forest Fire: Some Like it Hot” -- April 16th at Sonoma County Farm Bureau**

“I will discuss my findings regarding fungal recovery in ponderosa pine forests after the California Rim Fire. We sampled ectomycorrhizal (ECM) fungi (symbiotic with forest trees) before and after this fire, which killed most or every tree our long-term study plots. We found that certain ECM fungi survived the fire and dominated the colonization of forest seedlings. Furthermore, there were specific fire fungi that increased in abundance relative to other fungal species after the fire. Overall, our results show that although there is a reduction in the quantity of spores and species diversity, the disturbance community remained largely intact even after a catastrophic fire. I will also discuss how simple greenhouse bioassays can be used to determine which fungi will colonize after fires.”

Sydney Glassman has been studying the ecology of ectomycorrhizal fungi in the Bruns lab at UC Berkeley for the last 5 years. She has studied the cascading effects of Sudden Oak Death induced mortality of tanoaks on ectomycorrhizal fungi, the diversity of ECM spore banks in pine forests across North America, the drivers of fungal diversity in Yosemite National Park, and most recently, the effects of the devastating Rim Fire on ectomycorrhizal fungal communities. For fun, Sydney is teaching herself to be a better chef and sharing recipes she makes with the mushrooms she forages on her blog, [www.fungifoodie.com](http://www.fungifoodie.com). Sydney plans to complete her PhD program within the next year and will be on the job market soon.



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The Sonoma County Mycological Association (SOMA) Is A Non-Profit (501C) Educational Organization Dedicated To Mycology. We Encourage Environmental Awareness By Sharing Our Enthusiasm Through Public Participation In Monthly Meetings, Academic Presentations, Camp SOMA And Guided Forays In The Wild.

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# President's Letter

## DISPATCH FROM THE DUFF:

Independent of the lack of rain, SOMA Forays in January, February and March were considered successful by participants because of the diversity of species found and identified. Groups have averaged 35-40 people and all were keen to learn the characteristics and names of the 70-80 species found. There were enough edibles in the collection to heighten interest and keep everyone on the mantra, "we'll be back next fall".

Michael Beug spoke to the group at the SOMA General Meeting in March, 2015. He is Professor Emeritus of The Evergreen State College in Olympia, Washington after teaching chemistry, mycology and organic farming for 32 years. In retirement, he continues to speak at many mushroom clubs on the West Coast and going with students on extended field trips. He also serves on the NAMA Education Committee and is chair of the NAMA toxicology committee.

His presentation covered the diverse group of Fungi described in his first book, *Ascomycete Fungi of North America*. The book was co-authored with Alan and Arleen Bessette and published in March, 2014. He began by describing the Phylum, Ascomycota, and the its relevant importance to plant communities and humans. Michael differentiated between species found above and those found below ground. He noted individual species are identified and classified based on morphological or physiological features that are similar to ascus-bearing taxa and by phylogenetic analyses of DNA sequences.

He described why the group is of particular relevance to humans as sources for medicinally important compounds, such as antibiotics and for making bread, alcoholic beverages, and cheese, but also as pathogens of humans and plants. He covered the characteristics and identification of many familiar examples of sac fungi, including morels, truffles, brewer's yeast and baker's yeast. He also discussed Dead man's fingers (*Xylaria polymorpha*), and Devil's cigar (*Chorioactis geaster*). The latter, a very rare mushroom found in select places only in Texas and Japan.

Healsopassedalongseveral tipsonphotographingandmicroscopic examination of ascomycete species. Folks enjoyed his presentation and many of the audience had a chance to discuss other topics with Michael as well as purchase a copy of his book at the end of the night.

As a footnote, the book was published by the University of Texas Press and describes over 600 species with 843 color images. It is featured in the, 'Corrie Herring Hooks Series', established by Verna Hooks McLean and Ruth McLean Bowers in honor of their mother and grandmother, a lifelong naturalist and conservationist. There are 38 books in the series and all have very interesting titles and topics. Please let me know if you are interested in purchasing a copy of Michael's book.

## SOMA Notes:

\* There is no SOMA sponsored "morel" foray scheduled as of today. Check the website, [SOMA@yahoogroups.com](mailto:SOMA@yahoogroups.com), for up to date information.

\* The VAD picnic is scheduled on July 26th, at Riverfront Regional Park, just south of Windsor. A theme will be selected and published soon.

\* The SOMA Bookstore Clearance Sale will be held at the May General Meeting. Be prepared!

Best regards, Jim Wheeler



# The Foray Report: March 2015

By The SOMA Foray Coordinator

Pot luck food and fungal fortuitousness helped make our March monthly foray a sweet success for all who came to cavort in the woods and mix with others of the certainly same ilks. A good time was seemed to be had by all.

Expert amateur mycologist, SOMA's George Riner, did show and tell for rank beginners and intermediate mushroomers alike as he displayed great knowledge of our beloved Salt Point State Park's offerings for that day.

And there were oddballs not only in his audience but also upon the specimen table.



Shaggy Manes

Credit: <http://botit.botany.wisc.edu>

One *B. edulis* was seen there in spite of its out of seasonness along with another denizen of the piney duff, the handsome Man on Horseback. Also found were Shaggy Manes, suillus of several kinds, the not so delicious *Lactarius*, *Russulas* of varying coloring, the scrumptious Sweet Tooth and its cousins the Belly Buttons, a few dye mushrooms (*Cortinarius smithii*), and the always welcome Rainbow chanterelles. Noice!

Food was fab and for those who didn't come and partake we had a quick chorus of "Neener, Neener."

This was our last foray until September's which usually shows some assorted chanterelles and a few early porcini and always great grub from those who are adept at such.

We want to thank all of you who come to the forays, join with membership, and show the good cheer and spirit of our club. And we thank the Fungal Gods for SPSP.



# The Cat Who Ate Mushrooms

By Meredith Sabini PhD

Cats and mushrooms are an unlikely duo. After all, it's probably not a feline that gnawed holes in those Boletes you were hoping to take home from the woods. The feline in this story happened to eat a mushroom because of a culinary mishap in my kitchen. The incident led me to ponder whether the role of foraged and cultivated mushrooms in the diets of people, pets, barnyard, and farm animals could be expanded. I've been foraging wild edibles for years and avidly support gleaning, so this line of thinking isn't unusual for me. Those of you with experience in this area may have come ideas about this possibility.

The feline in this tale is a pewter gray female, 6 or 7, who is a selective but not a picky eater. My cat Lili loves liver, gladly eats fish or meat scraps from my plate, and considers sweet potato-and-chicken baby food a real treat. The mushrooms she encountered were organic shiitakes from Berkeley's Monterey Market, which I purchase weekly. I am fortunate to pass the store going to and from my office; if you don't know the place, I highly recommend a field trip. They have what I believe is the largest selection of edible fungi in the greater Bay area.

There's an entire aisle devoted to mushrooms – the usual basics like button, crimini, and porcini; plenty of the new gourmet cultivated varieties, in bulk, not prepackaged; and lots of wild species for months each year.

I've been taking medicinal mushroom preparations for a long time, mainly Stamets' Community 7, and my immune system has improved markedly. Thanks to the good information provided by Jill Nussinow's and Zach Mazi's classes at Camp, my appreciation for the health benefits of fresh shrooms over tinctures and tablets has increased, and I try to eat them regularly.

On Sundays, I cook food for the week, so I can take lunches to work and have dinners to heat



Credit: ScaRRed

on my return. I prepare one of two staple dishes, to which I add shiitakes and criminis: wild rice and quinoa, in equal portions, cooked separately; or a grain blend of red and brown rices, whole oat, rye, and barley, and perhaps wheat berries.

(continued)



# The Cat Who Ate Mushrooms...

...continued

From David Campbell's lively cooking demos, I've learned to chop mushrooms into small pieces so they get coated in oil or butter to carry their flavor; then I glaze them with soy sauce. I season both dishes with toasted sesame oil and gomasio. The result is rich and savory, satisfying to vegetarians and also fine with additions of meat or poultry.

It was a Sunday last winter, while I was transferring a skilletful of shiitakes into the rice dish, that the wooden spoon slipped and some tumbled onto the floor. My cat, sitting nearby, noticed the arrival of morsels at her level, went over to sniff, sampled one, then ate the rest and looked up expectantly. I'd already sauteed black trumpets, yellow feet, and hedgehogs, and couldn't resist giving her tiny pieces of each. They too passed the taste test.

This "isn't my pet cute" incident did not lead to my buying pricey wild mushrooms for her, nor am I recommending such silliness. It did lead to my remembering the huge quantity of *Armillaria mellea* in my freezer, a specimen I happen to favor as a decent substitute for shiitake. Often shunned due to their parasitic nature and their ability to induce upset stomachs, Honey mushrooms are a meaty, sturdy variety that holds up with hard cooking and with freezing. They appear in great abundance in both wild and urban settings; the ones in my freezer came from a street tree in Mill Valley. I collect so many Honeys every year that I often don't know what to do with the excess, as I already have plenty of jars of dried ones.

I gave my cat a few tiny pieces for three mornings in a row, to see if they would pass safely through her GI tract; they seemed to. And Lili now eats the occasional honeys and oysters from my dried supply, as well as leftover buttons. I'm sure SOMA members also end up with an excess of their favorite fungi, and also wonder what to do with them. Even at Monterey Market, big plastic bags full of less than perfect specimens appear at the end of the aisle each week.

Mushrooms are making headlines these days:

doing biorremediation, beefing up burgers in upscale bistros; even mycelium is being made into packaging material and, thanks to Stamets' astonishing ingenuity, into healthier beehives. Sonoma County is a bastion of creative culinery and revitalized food cultivation.



**Shiitake logs**

**Credit: 15thousand farmers.colm**

Surely there are other things we could be doing with the lowfat, high protein our excess mushrooms provide? If anyone likes my idea of developing MycoChow, my cat and I would be glad to lease the concept for a modest sum, or, better yet, take trade for hints as to good Chantrelle locations!



# Photo of the Month By Darwin DeShazer

SOMA Camp has more workshops, sessions, forays, speakers, wine tastings and other events than even the attendees would believe possible in one weekend! Among those topics of growing interest is DNA identification. Here is a shot of Alan Rockefeller in his ad hoc DNA lab and workshop at SOMA CAMP 2015.



**Credit: Darwin DeShazer**



## “Huh--The Morel Dilemmas”

By Patrick Hamilton

Much like a hyaline vision of mustangs running wildly free across the vast and unpeopled plains, valleys, and mountains of The West, morels once too roamed unbridled. Unfettered by scores of pickers these morchellas of generations ago grew as today (where they wanted to) but went unplucked to sporulate into the winds of their choice and not get plopped into the bags, baskets, and buckets of the hordes who hound them now mercilessly. And we got this messed up weather now too.

What's with all the TV weather folk telling us back in mid-February that March “looks to be having at least half of the month with rain in the forecasts?” Or something close to that. Are the computer models screwed up because of gigo? The old ‘garbage in, garbage out’ syndrome? What--there is no good data because any weather history no longer applies? This “new normal” has no historical model from which to make good weather projections? That's botched up too.

And you couple this with all the young(er) morel hunters now and some of us old(er) folk just haven't got the same chances we had at a bonanza pick we used to back when the weather was accountable for itself and



*Morchella elata*

*Credit: Wikipedia*

all these new pickers were in diapypoos and we were hale and hearty as could be.

Just the other day three of us with some fine aging were going down really steep slopes trying to find more *Morchella tomentosus* (= “burns”) and we did score some but saw mostly boot prints heading even more downhill, down into the ravines where I once treaded, unbothered by old knees, and now tethered with too much common sense (I knew that no matter how far down into that hellfire-scorched crispy conifered-canyon I hiked those same boot holes in the duff would be preceding me and damnfully accompanying the picker himself who surely took my morels).

Once was there were almost no people in my burns. Once was the weather folk knew stuff. Once I was a lot youthfuller. Once was this hadn't happened yet.

But what always does is the recipe part of this pap and this month's is simple and surely great:

# Morels a Very Best Way

Serves two

Rinse making sure no dirt was left on the stem bottoms, then chop, or slice into wheels a handful of burn morels, and put into a medium hot sauté pan with 1 1/2 Tbls of sweet butter, and cook for at least 5 minutes, mixing a bit. In the meantime, chop finely about 1 Tbl of shallots and toss them in too. Stir or shake or agitate anyhow the pan to mix, cook for a minute or two. Add a small splash of dry Sherry and mix and cook au sec then add a nice amount of heavy cream and cook for just a minute or two over low.

Use your best sea salt flakes and fresh ground pepper to finish.

It will be another one of those voilas and make you the most popular person in the kitchen, period. Do share.

Do get up into either the King Fire burn or the Rim Fire burn to look because we all realize “if you don’t go you won’t know.” Double duh. Duh.



Credit: FineCooking.com

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**JOIN SOMA!** Head to <http://somamushrooms.org/membership>

Membership in the Sonoma County Mycological Association, or SOMA, is a great way to meet and interact with other mushroom enthusiasts, learn more about identifying fungi, and share interests such as cooking and cultivating mushrooms. Sure, most of what SOMA does is open to the public, but wouldn't you rather join SOMA and get all the goodies?

**Head to <http://somamushrooms.org/membership> and sign up!**

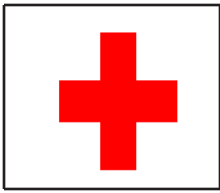


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## ***EMERGENCY MUSHROOM POISONING ID:***

After seeking medical attention, contact Darvin DeShazer for identification at (707) 829-0596. Email photos to: [muscaria@pacbell.net](mailto:muscaria@pacbell.net) and be sure to photograph all sides, cap and of the mushroom. Please do not send photos taken with older cell phones – the resolution is simply too poor to allow accurate identification. NOTE: Always be 100% sure of the identification of any mushroom before you eat it!

## **Scholarship Update**

Thanks to the generosity of donors and campers, our silent auction and raffle at SOMA camp generated over \$5500. Much of these funds directly benefited students in our area by way of awards at science fairs in Sonoma County. It is wonderful that SOMA was able to recognize excellence in scientific studies in such a profound way.

Any amount of unused auction money will be applied to our graduate level scholarships. Since the closing date for application is the end of May, we still have no idea how many we will be awarding, but last year we gave 5. All those extra funds are being put to good use.

It is hoped that through these awards we continue to encourage creative thinking and scientific exploration in young students. Student winners were granted from \$50-\$100 each for their projects and their teachers given similar amounts to help augment their classroom science budgets.

Thank you all for your donations of over 100 items and for those of you who bid and won items. Hopefully next year, our efforts will generate even more!

**By Rachel Zierdt**

## **SOMA Calendar 2014**

\* **SOMA Monthly Meeting April 16th at 7:00 PM. Speaker Sydney Glassman; at the Sonoma County Farm Bureau (see map that follows).**

\* **SOMA Camp Volunteer Appreciation Picnic July 26, Riverfront Regional Park on Eastside Road.**

## **SOMA MAP & DIRECTIONS**

**SOMA** usually meets on the third Thursday of the month throughout the year (September through May), at the Sonoma County Farm Bureau, 970 Piner Road, Santa Rosa, California, 94931. Fungi are displayed at 7 PM, and speakers begin around 7:30 PM. Bring in your baffling fungi to be identified!

### **Directions to the Sonoma County Farm Bureau**

#### **From the south:**

- Go north on Hwy 101
- Pass the Steel Lane exit then take the Bicentennial Way exit
- Go over Hwy 101 (heading west) and then right on Range Ave
- Turn left on Piner Rd and go about 1/4 mile
- Turn left into Farm Bureau parking lot at 970 Piner Road

#### **From the north:**

- Go south on Hwy 101
- Take the first Santa Rosa exit for Hopper Ave/Mendocino Ave
- Stay left on the frontage road (it becomes Cleveland Ave)
- Turn right on Piner Rd and go about 1/4 mile
- Turn left into Farm Bureau parking lot at 970 Piner!

