

NAMA Foray 2008, McCall, Idaho

The skies over McCall poured forth timely rains, and the mushrooms in turn poured from the ground for the 2008 NAMA foray. Many fabulous fungi showed up for this event, some that had not been seen in many seasons and others that return year after year like old friends. The human contingent was impressive, too: a veritable Who's Who of amateur and professional mycologists converged upon McCall from around the country not only to hunt and share information, but to honor one of our own—the much beloved Dr. Orson Miller.

McCall is where Orson and Hope Miller chose to retire, and after several days of hunting its beautiful and productive forests, we all could see why! The foray was sponsored by the Southern Idaho Mycological Association (SIMA), and their dedicated members did a fine job of providing all the creature comforts and a wide variety of programs and excursions for eager participants. Most welcomed by me in our foray packets was a compendium of “Trees of Idaho,” a lovely illustrated booklet put out by the USDA Forest Service. For those with limited Western collecting experience, a presentation early on by a pair of local Forest Rangers gave helpful hints about wilderness travel, including the dangers of dehydration, proper etiquette when meeting wildlife, and a warning to not use poison oak as toilet paper. Good advice!

When our California contingent flew into Boise, we were greeted with a xeric landscape dominated by sagebrush. But as we headed north and rose in elevation, we discovered a forested wonderland. The extensive woods that surround McCall are dominated by conifers and contain patches of old growth that mix pines and firs, hemlock, larch and yew, and Englemann spruce, with its needles curiously clasping the stem. Lakes, streams, and rivers abounded, and hot springs provided a soothing haven for the weary. The local wildlife was no less impressive, with elk, moose, mountain lions, and even wolves lurking unseen in the wings. Fortunately, no mushroomers were carried off while crouching, oblivious, over their finds; perhaps it was due to the myco-maddened gleams in our eyes, or our loud screams of delight.

We taxonomists were overjoyed by the many curious species collected; 255 species was the unofficial total at press time. (Check the NAMA Web site for the species list and final tally.) But it was not all about the science of mushrooms. Edible mushroom fans were happy to find enormous *Boletus edulis* and their smaller, younger, more pan-friendly buttons, as well as big collections of our one good, edible *Cortinarius* species, *C. caperatum*, or the “gypsy mushroom” formerly known as *Rozites*. Even the oft-scorned *Suillus* made an impressive showing; we found several beautiful and unusual species, including *Suillus cavipes* with its attractively colored cap and curiously hollowed stipe.

Chief mycologist Dr. Cathy Cripps and her team of ace identifiers holed up in the lab, 'scopes at the ready, putting names to the many species collected. Vera Evenson worked tirelessly at Cathy's side, naming many fleshy fungi in general and *Hebelomas* in particular. Dr. Walt Sundberg put his long years of experience to good use, helping to create order out of ID chaos. Drs. Michael Beug and Bob Antibus worked up the corals as well as other fungal puzzles. Dr. Steve Trudell and Judy Roger, two more of the fine PNW professionals, also attended. Dr. Steve Miller helped distinguish between the many similar species of *Russula*, including a veritable rainbow of shrimp-scented *R. xerampelina*. Dr. Rod Tulloss arrived at the eleventh hour to correct and enhance our *Amanita* IDs and add his good nature to the proceedings. The abilities and keen eyes of Dr. Jean Lodge elucidated many curious *Hygrophorus* species, while Drs. Tom Volk and Jessie Glazer made the oft-times ignored polypores spring to life. Dr. Pat Leacock traveled from Chicago to help put names to some unusual *Lactarius* species and transport voucher specimens back to the Field Museum. Dr. Bob Chehey of Boise was a font of local mushroom knowledge, and his experience helped speed our IDs. An amazing 40 distinctive species of lichen were named by knowledgeable local lichenologist Dr. Roger Rosentretter, and the extraordinarily dedicated Adele Menche labored long over her laptop, recording our finds for the NAMA Voucher Committee. Graduate students Jeff Cameroon, Josh Birkebak, Wyatt Gaswick, and other interested and talented folks also helped with ID, and John Plishke III and Noah Siegel did a great job documenting it all with digital voucher photos.

Fungal highlights of the foray were the aforementioned great piles of giant *edulis*, and plenty of other outsized specimens, too, including *Albatrellus* (*ovinus*, *flettii*, and *ellisii*), *Catathelasma ventricosum*, *Leucopaxillus* (*albissimus* and *gentianus*), beautiful collections of dinner-plate sized, orange-capped “*Amanita amerimuscaria*” (soon to be formally described and split off from *A. muscaria*), the giant western puffball *Calvatia booniana* (bigger than a football), and western *Cortinarius* sp. big enough for footstools (if you had really small feet). As Cathy Cripps quipped, “Maybe fungi, like potatoes, grow bigger in Idaho!”

Those sated by field collecting, uninterested in the lab, or just curious about current research by top names in the field attended talks presented around the clock on a variety of topics ranging from Rosentretter's “Diets of Flying Squirrels” (you go, “Rocky”!) to Steve Miller's “Russulas: Love 'Em or Leave 'Em.” The perennially engaging Tom Volk spoke about “Wood Decay—Good Decay.” Cathy Cripps offered her personalized version of “Fungi in the Forest Ecosystem,” drawing from her many seasons of local collecting with both Orson Miller and SIMA. Photography workshops were ably presented by FUNGI Magazine's John Plischke III, and NAMA cultivation maven Ron Spinosa showed participants how to grow their own oyster mushrooms. And of

course the edible fungi fans were well served by NAMA's Culinary Queen Ursula Pohl, resplendent in her fanciful fungus hat.

Maggie Rogers brought a wide spectrum of mushroom and mycology books for Friday night's silent auction. The bidding was fierce, and the proceeds benefited the NAMA Memorial Fellowship endowment. The evening was also a sentimental tribute to Dr. Miller. Many of his former students, colleagues, and friends made the long journey to McCall, and several got up before the group and offered words of tribute. When Cathy Cripps asked the 150 people present to raise their hands if they knew or had been influenced by Orson, almost everyone did. Through it all, Hope Miller sat proudly, surrounded by her family, and basked in the love that was palpable throughout the event.

Vera Evenson, dedicated teacher, author, and taxonomist with the Colorado Mycological Society, received the Award for Contributions to Amateur Mycology, and her pleasure and genuine surprise at receiving this honor were a joy to behold. Brian McNett from the Kitsap Peninsula Mycological Society received the Knighton Service Award, and Dr. Jo Anne Crouch from Rutgers University received the 2008 NAMA Memorial Fellowship, given this year in honor of Dr. Orson Miller. Also misty-eyed was long-time NAMA member, mycophagist extraordinaire, and friend to mushroomers near and far, the inimitable Larry Stickney. After his being unable to attend NAMA forays for a number of years, a band of mycological fairy godparents waved their *Battarrea* wands and Poof! . . . it was so. In your very active eighth decade, you continue to contribute to the mushrooming community in many wonderful ways; the pleasure was all ours, Larry.

Our final foray festivity was a public event in the town of McCall. Dr. Michael Beug, the featured speaker, gave an excellent presentation, "Mushrooms of Idaho," with stunning photographs from both his own work and that of his friend and mentor, Kit Scates. His talk engaged both NAMA members and McCall residents and was a fine way for NAMA to extend mushroom education beyond our own circle of mycologists and into the surrounding community. Before and after the talk, local wineries plied their trade and poured their products (first glass free!), and delicious wild mushroom dishes were offered to attendees. Many "must-have" mushroom items were auctioned off to benefit the MSA Endowment Fund in honor of Dr. Miller. The top money-maker and most gorgeous offering by far was a beautiful mushroom quilt, hand-made and donated by Hope Miller. Many thanks to all of our hardworking SIMA hosts!

It was a joy to see old friends, making some new ones and putting faces to familiar names—not to mention all those marvelous mushrooms. The 2009 NAMA National Foray, sponsored by the Gulf States Mycological Society, will be held in Lafayette, Louisiana, in November; don't miss out on the fun or the fungi! More details about the 2008 foray as well as upcoming NAMA events can be viewed at the NAMA Web site: www.namyco.org.

Help support NAMA, and keep those forays coming!

—Debbie Viess, Bay Area Mycological Society
www.bayareamushrooms.org