



Ohio Mushroom Society

# The Mushroom Log

## *Houby Hunting (A Neophyte Mycophile Finds Fungi in Iowa)*

By Lisa Bacon

Reprinted with permission from the December, 2007 *Mycena News*, of the Mycological Society of San Francisco.

Being of Czech or Slovak descent is a big thing in Iowa. I was raised in the small town of Toledo, 60 miles west of Cedar Rapids. In this region, the majority of locals claim some Czech heritage and proudly refer to ourselves as "bohemies." Homemade sauerkraut and kolaches (sweet dough pastries with various fillings in a well on the top) are a few of the dishes we cherish from our heritage. Anton Dvorjak reportedly wrote the New World Symphony while visiting relatives in a small town outside Cedar Rapids. On October 21, 1995, the National Czech and Slovak Museum's ([www.ncsml.org](http://www.ncsml.org)) current building was formally dedicated, with President Bill

Clinton of the US, Vaclav Havel of the Czech Republic, and Michal Kovac of the Slovak Republic presiding over the dedication. I visited this impressive, world class museum for the first time in September. You can find anything Czech in the Czech Village neighborhood of Cedar Rapids, including exquisite hand-blown glass mushrooms at the Czech Cottage. ([www.czechcottage.com](http://www.czechcottage.com))

Houba (pronounced how-ba) is the Czechoslovakian name for mushroom. The plural is houby (technically pronounced how-bee). As often happens in assimilating cultures and languages, many Midwesterners use a bastardized pronunciation (who-bee). Since Bohemies are foodies in our own right, it comes as no surprise that all over the Midwest we commemorate the bountiful spring mushrooms with a variety of festivals. In Cedar Rapids, Houby Days occurs in mid-May. As one might expect, it consists of a parade, folk music, folk dancing, beer, food, and more food. All of this adoration centers around the

ONLY spring mushroom most people are interested in, the glorious morel (specifically *Morchella angusticeps* and *M. esculenta*). My sister-in-law Anne went on a foray near Ames this past spring where there were so many morels they left hundreds on the ground. Imagine!

Unlike many parts of California, in Iowa you can find fungi virtually everywhere. Elevations range from 480-1670 feet, with the best areas at around 850 feet. The rich black soils are mostly loess and loam, with scattered areas of sand and clay. As one might expect, the land is predominantly devoted to agriculture (corn, soybeans, and grazing pastures with only 10% being forest lands. These forests (locally known as "timbers") are mostly concentrated in the mid-central to eastern part of the state. According to the Iowa Dept. of Forestry, oak and oak/hickory forests make up about 46% of Iowa's woodlands. The oaks fall into two categories: white oaks (white, bur, swamp white, chinkapin, overcup)

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and red oaks (red, black, northern pin, shingle). Other species of trees found in these woods are ironwood, ashes, hard maples, walnuts, dwindling numbers of elms and black cherry, and woody shrubs. The forests are threaded with rivers, cricks (creeks), lakes and ponds. Additional moisture comes in the form of magnificent thunderstorms and substantial snowfall. Edible fungi can be found in spring, summer and fall. Most of us prefer spring and fall foraging, because the summer brings swarms of bloodthirsty mosquitoes accompanied by frequently unbearable heat and humidity. The white tail deer population is epidemic in proportion, as are the deer ticks that go with them. These bambis make their California kin look like large dogs. They pose an enormous threat as you drive to your favorite foray spots, as they spring out of cornfields and up from ditches. Once in the timber, I personally worry more about getting chased by an angry Black Angus bull as one forages, a flashback to getting hung up on barbed wire while making a hurried and graceless exit from a pasture in my reckless youth. One of my favorite childhood mushroom memories is waking up one sunny spring morning to find our front yard carpeted with what seemed like several hundred black morels. Five siblings poured out onto the lawn, each chortling that they could pick

more than the others, but all conspiring to pick quickly so that none of the neighbors could share in our fortune. Iowa Bohemians are not as overt as the Illinois branch. They actually have a Bohemian Creed ([www.csagsi.org/creed.htm](http://www.csagsi.org/creed.htm)) Two items acutely outline their stealth tactics:

“12. Prior to removing car from garage, scan skies for possible inclement weather; if forecast is acceptable, prepare for “houby” hunt.

13. Camouflage all houby hunting equipment from neighbors, proceed to secret place for houby with caution (i.e. drive through alleys, around the block several times, down wide streets) to insure you are not being followed by neighbors who might discover the place for your houby picking”

Hmm...I think MSSFers are a little more subtle and less paranoid in keeping their “spots” secret.

At the end of my recent extended visit to Iowa, I was able to exercise and hone my mycological skills. My niece Madie found what she believed to be a false morel. Since it was fall, I doubted that was true. My budding knowledge of mycology led me to ascertain that it was a stinkhorn (*Phallus impudicus*). My brother Brian introduced me to a delightful couple, Bill and Nancy Carlson, who invited me out to foray on their farm.

On an overcast Saturday morning late in September,

Bill and I set out in the “beast”, an aged four wheel drive dump truck to visit his favorite spots on 80+ acres of rolling hills covered with pastures and substantial oak forests bordering the Iowa River. Bill has carefully cleared out much of the underbrush, making it a forager’s dream. An avid hunter, he has deer blinds all over his property. Personally, I think they could double as mushroom spotting towers. Bill assured me the Black Angus herd was “friendly” and we romped around foraging for several hours. I introduced Bill to the term “LBM.” He shared wonderful tales of hunting and foraging. We came back to Nancy’s hot coffee and delicious pickled salmon (made from fish caught in Wisconsin of all places). In true Bohemian fashion, Bill and Nancy sent me back to town with all kinds of mushrooms as well as loads of beautiful squash from their garden. I sautéed most of the edibles in butter for brunch with my ailing father the next morning.

I tried to document the fungi in the wild, but my camera was uncooperative. Special thanks to Roger Heidt, of the Prairie State Mushroom Club ([www.geocities.com/iowafunqi/](http://www.geocities.com/iowafunqi/)), for kindly helping me identify some of the less obvious fungi. I also obtained a fabulous laminated field guide, *Mushrooms in Your Pocket—A Guide to the Mushrooms of Iowa*, for

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\$9.99 (ISBN 87745-887-1).  
Hint: would be useful for California IDs, as well. I am intrigued by the colloquial names for mushrooms in different geographic areas and have listed them using their local Bohemian names. Specimens ID'ed included: Honey Mushrooms (*Armillaria mellea*), small puffballs (*Lycoperdon pyriforme*), Goat's Beard (*Grifola frondosa*) aka Hen of the Woods, giant puffballs (*Calvatia gigantea*), sulfur mushroom (*Omphalotus illudens*) aka Jack-o-Lanterns, lawyer's wig (*Coprinus comatus*), wood ear (*Auricularia aricula*).

When I returned to California, I sent Bill and Nancy a copy of Aurora's *Mushrooms Demystified*. They surprised me with an open invitation to bring friends to camp and forage on their farm. Anyone up for a houby hunting trip to Iowa in May?

#### **OMS Member, Glenn Roth, Wins Cooking Honor**

Glenn Roth, of Akron, won a national wild foods cooking honor late last September.

Roth, who seeks out nature enjoyment opportunities, found one called the North Bend State Park Nature Wonder Wild Foods Weekend in WV where his talents won him top honors. The nature weekend was

celebrating its 40<sup>th</sup> year since the noted wild foods guru Euell Gibbons went there and declared that section of the Ohio River Valley the "garden spot of the nation for wild food gathering."

Speaking about the 40<sup>th</sup> observance, Roth said, "I won top honors for my black Trumpet Mushroom Dip, which is one of several wild foods I enjoy. A woman from WV had a prize winning violet jelly roll and a man from Pennsylvania had a Chicken of the Woods prize winning casserole.

Roth has his own small museum of edible wild things. "Down there in WV, however, we were surrounded by the aura of Gibbons who made wild food famous. We hiked the Euell Gibbons Nature Trail. We heard stories of how he turned the free food from the land idea into wild food during his first appearance there before his death in 1976. We prepared wild provender in his "gourmet way" for a social hour for 100 people under the direction of Edeline Wood, president of the National Wild Foods Association. In an amazing wild food event, we connected people from all fifty states to our world of wild food fun."

*Pothunter's  
Periodical # 1*

#### **By Dick Grimm**

Ed. Note: This is the first entry for 2008 from Dick's ongoing "collector for the pot" observations. I thought I'd include it here, since there's not much going on "out there" right about now.

Happy New Year everyone! I guess I'm on time given that 2008 lasts another 11 months and twenty days. About a foot of snow out there today but a warm weekend (plus) forecast should take care of that and keep all that mycelium well watered for the spring and summer mushroom growth. I guess that is some premature myco-optimism but one must always think positively.

Sent out the notice for board meeting today...that is to say my part in the endeavor, which is to reserve the meeting room at my local library and also notify the local restaurant to be ready for 12 hungry shroomers for breakfast. This particular restaurant specializes in pancakes...not variety, but rather size! They completely cover a dinner plate and stand about a half inch thick. If one orders more than a single, they're in danger of missing the board meeting trying to finish it off!

Here is how the board meeting works: We meet only once a year to plan the entire year's activities. We each take on several projects regarding regular forays...About four spring

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morel forays, a summer foray, and a fall foray. After that has been satisfied we set up several mini forays for the entire season. And — beyond these— we have what we call spontaneous forays. These latter forays may be called by anyone (including you) and are typically quite successful regarding mushroom quantities because they are only called-up if there are plenty of mushrooms available. Obviously the other forays are a shot in the dark...when you plan forays in February for April, May, July-August, and September-October; hitting the correct weather condition becomes a trip to Las Vegas in Ohio. But still, along with programming, we always have a good time... best damned bunch of people I was ever associated with! Anyhow — keep it in mind *for* this coming summer (and *during* this coming summer) and volunteer for one of these mini-events. You don't have to be an authority on identification, we can usually work that out for you if we get enough notice. So...that's the way the system works. We usually schedule these forays during a time when there are some good edibles available, and, during the search for these, one learns a lot about mushrooms in general.

There isn't too much to talk about during the winter months where mushrooms are concerned but do keep in mind that the winter

mushroom..."Velvet Foot" does appear, usually on old and dying elm trees during warm snaps in January. Understand, of course, "warm snaps" in Ohio in January isn't "T" shirt and shorts weather. However, if the temps hang around just above freezing to 40 or 45 degrees for a spell, get out there in that elm valley and look for those orange and yellow capped, slimy, velvet stemmed mushrooms that peep out from behind the bark on dying elm in clusters of a few to many. This is sort of hamburger rather than steak when one compares them with morels, pink bottoms, shaggy manes or oysters, but they're not too bad and you're sitting in front of that "Tele" too much anyhow. Get out there and get some of that winter stink blown off...

When I wrote that name oysters (above) it brought to mind a little deceitful stunt I pulled over Christmas. I have always felt that oyster mushrooms could be substituted for the actual shell fish, at least to some degree, if handled correctly. Some shroomers think they taste like oysters anyhow, but I never could buy into that thought. They're called oysters because they grow as do oysters...shelving in clusters in their manner of growth. Anyhow, that aside, being the cheapskate that I am I used a half pint of oysters (always use select oysters— standard oysters are bitter from the

beginning—) we're talking \$7.50 a half pint for these slimy buggers! Slice the mushrooms just about the same size as the oysters and marinate them (along with the oysters) in the natural juice in the can plus the same amount of water... about a can full, in the fridge overnight. When you make the scalloped oysters use about as many oyster crackers (soda crackers are ok but use fewer, of course) as the bulk already in the mix. Then add about a cup of whole milk (not skimmed or 1%) and about a quarter pound of butter sliced over the top. Salt and pepper realistically. I roll about a cup of dried stove top dressing rather fine and spread it over the top of the mess. (Uh, sorry...mix I meant to say). Put it in the oven at about 300 and don't over - cook (bake) it. Remember...the longer you cook oysters, the more bitter they become. When oyster edges start to curl, get them out of the heat. I fed the mess...uh, mass... to escalloped oyster lovers at Christmas dinner. Would you believe — they licked the platter clean and never knew half the load was *Pleurotus ostreatus!* *And*, I saved at least \$7.50 another can of those extravagant shellfish would have set me back. Hah, and you thought Scrooge was the only cheap-butt at Christmas time. By the way, the mushrooms were ones I had dried this past fall, so actually they were reconstituted in oyster juicy water. Since oysters

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are only supposed to be in season with months containing the letter "R" it makes sense to seasonally match the two. Keep in mind, too, that *Pleurotus dry* beautifully and the process enhances the flavor. Deceit is practiced often in the hobby of mushrooming. A person can rattle off some big, long, Latin name to a beginner, keep a straight face, and it works every time! This excludes the genus *Amanita*, of course since the guy may be planning to eat it.

To sum up, last year's mushroom season as a whole, one would need to give it two thumbs down. Although there were periodic flushes of the critters, the dry summer wasn't conducive to fungi. This, of course, is the constant Achilles' heel of mushroom hunting and an annual dilemma for those of us who gather in February to try to make our society as productive and fun loving as we possibly can.

Remember, people, you get out of something what you put into it so don't be bashful about volunteering, and if you're not into that, at least don't be bashful about showing up at club functions. Sure, some of the preplanned forays are going to be bummers regarding collecting, but we can't control the weather and you'll learn something about mushrooms at club functions even if we don't find anything (which seldom, if ever,

happens). No question goes unanswered unless you don't ask it.

I would take this opportunity, also, to thank everyone concerned regarding my annual honorary dinner. The food was great and the camaraderie, as always, was even greater. I am always humbled by the bequest. Only bad thing about it this year was that it was the night Ohio state lost to Illinois. But in New Orleans...Go Bucks!!!

Editor's Note: Predicting, or hoping for football outcomes is not unlike planning forays months in advance. But in both cases, we always have "Wait'll next year!"

### **SUDDEN OAK DEATH DISCOVERED IN SCOTLAND FOR FIRST TIME**

By Vic Rodrick

*Reprinted from 6 Jan, 2008.  
Mail on Sunday, London, via  
The Spore Print—The Journal  
of the Los Angeles Mycological  
Society.*

Garden centres have been urged to impose strict bio-hazard measures to halt the spread of a deadly plant disease.

The move follows the discovery of sudden oak death fungus in Scotland for

the first time, at two public gardens run by the National Trust.

The disease which has killed tens of thousands of trees in the US was discovered at Arduaine Gardens, near Oban, Argyll, and Inverewe Gardens, Wester Ross, in the North-West Highlands.

Now nurseries have been advised to set up quarantine areas for new plants and to place baths of soapy water, disinfectant, and brushes for removing soil from footwear, thought to be the principal route of the disease's spread into the countryside.

Highlands and Islands Tory MSP Jamie McGrigor urged the Scottish Executive to do everything in its power to contain what has been called the foot and mouth of the horticultural world.

He said: The horticultural and garden tourism sectors are of significant value to the economy in the Highlands and Islands and none of us want to see them being hit by this potentially extremely destructive disease. I think that, while bio-security measures may be an annoyance, the long-term future of the shrub and plants and trees of Scotland is a vital part of our heritage. Anything that threatens them should be treated with the utmost seriousness. Sudden oak death is caused by the fungus *Phytophthora ramorum*, which is ideally suited to Scotland's climate.

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Symptoms include leaf discoloration and root rot. There is no known treatment except to dig up and burn affected plants. Scotland has many famous heritage trees at risk, including the Covenanters Oak at Dalzell House, Motherwell, Lanarkshire, and the Fiddle Tree or Neil Gows Oak in Perthshire.

The Birman Oak is said to be the last survivor of Birnam Wood, which was featured in Macbeth. It is one of Perthshires's best known tourist attractions.

The Lochwood Oaks in Dumfries and Galloway are believed to be the remnants of a forest dating back centuries.

A Scottish Forestry Commission spokesman said: Buyers of host species mainly rhododendrons, camellias, and viburnum are advised to check plants before purchase for symptoms of the disease and to contact their garden centres if these subsequently develop.

### **Invasive Species, Extinctions, and Other Cheery Topics To Get You Through the Winter Blahs...**

**By Dave Miller**

The above article referring to the Sudden Oak Death's

appearance in Scotland should send chills down the spines of all good folk, who are attuned to the seeming endless list of environmental disasters which appear to be accumulating with increasing frequency. Chief among these are invasive species.

Invasive species are accidentally introduced into a wholly new environment by (mostly) human activity. A few fungal examples: Chestnut blight was first reported in 1904; by the 1930-40's, it had killed almost all American chestnut trees. No small feat for a microscopic fungus, as the chestnut had once occupied enormous stretches of the Appalachians.

The blight fungus, known to foresters as *Cryphonectria parasitica*, is native to Asia, where the Chinese chestnut, having been exposed to the pathogen for millennia, has developed considerable resistance, making it relatively immune. Our American chestnut had no such resistance and when the blight was inadvertently imported on some infected Chinese chestnut trees in the 1890's, you know the rest. You can still find some rotted out chestnut stumps (up to 12 feet in diameter!) with healthy sprouts growing from its roots. These sprouts remain healthy until their trunks reach a size (2-4 inch diameters) where the bark develops microscopic fissures as the tree expands in girth. This is all the spores

of the blight need to breach the bark and then attack and destroy the tree's cambium (the cells which divide to produce ever more wood and bark). Eventually the cambium is killed right the way around the trunk (called girdling), which kills the tree.

Hot on its heels came the Dutch elm disease, "imported" to the East Coast from Europe in 1930 on elm (Continued on Page 8)

### **Sustainability and Fungi: The Big Picture** **By Larry Evans**

*Reprinted with permission from The Mycophile, Sept/Oct., 2007*

Reflecting now on the frontiers of mushroom cultivation, it seems to me that we are on the edge of transforming the way we view agricultural and yard "waste," carbon sequestration, and resource management. The only problem is that it challenges centuries of primitive habits.

Recently, I have been advising people in their efforts to or investigations into transforming their litter piles into mushroom compost in Africa, South America, Fiji, Japan, and elsewhere around the world. A tropical pig farmer looks at how best to utilize tons of pig manure and tropical hardwood shavings. A Brazilian woman seeks to identify and preserve the

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fungi in her tiny Atlantic rainforest reserve. A man in Zimbabwe learns to grow oyster mushrooms on local agricultural wastes. A farmer in South Africa produces oyster mushrooms two months after getting spores, and a man in Tennessee relates his successful garden-propagation of his oyster mushrooms years after buying a kit. A group of young women forms a mushroom cultivation study group in Bolivia. A young man in Bangladesh seeks support for the establishment of a mushroom farm he feels can feed thousands of people a diet higher in protein.

These are the sorts of things that the Internet has assisted me in doing through the Fungal Jungal website. These are the micro-stories that get lost among tales of giant puffballs and toxin-busting white rot fungi, but they show the importance of increasing awareness of fungi and the vital role they play in our planet's life. But now they emerge as a factor in one of the biggest issues of our time: global climate change.

Carbon sequestration credits and the entire economy in carbon trading that they have spawned represent a potentially powerful tool in reducing the oxidation of carbon-hydrogen compounds that produce carbon dioxide and contribute to the widely discussed "greenhouse

effect." Schemes for carbon sequestration range from far-out (pumping carbon dioxide gas into deep wells under high pressure) to pragmatic (planting more trees) and even commonsensical (improving vehicle efficiency, outlawing large personal vehicles) which would earn credits---and thereby money---from the fossil-fuel burning entities.

Yet, each year millions of tons of carbon are needlessly and wastefully burned off in slash pile burns, whether from logging, agriculture, or other land management operations. According to USFS estimates, 334 *million* metric tons, or 368 *million* dry tons, of this biomass is sitting out there waiting to be burned every year. Or not? Is this a waste product? Not yet! Carbon dioxide, the result of burning it, yes that is a waste product. But organic matter, reduced carbon, is not. The energy stored in such plant material is a valuable resource and should be managed as such.

(Larry Evans practices what he preaches: he sustainably harvests wild mushrooms from the Pacific Northwest for profit. The Fungal Jungal is operated by the Western Montana Mycological Association as a 501(3) educational nonprofit organization. Membership and donations may be sent to P.O. Box 7306, Missoula, MT 59807.

Ed. Note: Converting "waste" into edibles and organic soil amendments sound like a win-win idea to me.

### Time to Renew OMS Dues are Due for 2008

A new year is upon us, and this means your OMS membership is up for renewal. OMS dues are still only \$10 per year, or \$125 for a lifetime membership. The cutoff date for dues payment is March 31, 2008. You will be removed from the *OMS Mushroom Log* mailing list after the March/April issue, if we haven't received dues from you before the subsequent issue is to be mailed. Use the handy renewal form provided in this Log. And please, alert us of any name, address, zip code, email, and telephone number or area code changes.

NAMA dues are also due now. NAMA dues for OMS members are \$32. To qualify for this rate, a separate check must be made out to NAMA and sent to OMS (Jerry Pepera) **not to NAMA**. If you send it to NAMA, they will send it back to us for verification since you must be an OMS member before you can join NAMA at this discounted rate. The benefits for joining NAMA include:

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1. A subscription to 6 issues of *The Mycophile*.

2. *Mycovainea*, a journal of recent fungal developments.

3. A booklet listing NAMA's entire membership.

# Calendar of Events

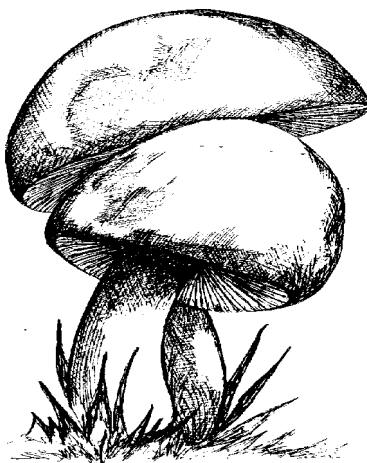
## OMS Events

Email Jerry at [g\\_pepera@sbcglobal.net](mailto:g_pepera@sbcglobal.net) to receive notification of impromptu events. Check your most recent issue of the *Mushroom Log* for event updates and for more detailed information. Please plan to join us.

We'll have a listing of upcoming events for 2008, once the Board meets on February 9. These will be posted in the March/April issue of the Log, which will come out in early March, in plenty of time to alert you to the first Morel Forays, as well as assorted later gatherings and hunts.

## Ohio & Regional

(Continued from Page 6)  
burl logs to be used for veneer. The fungal spores are carried and spread by female Elm bark beetles, that burrow under the tree's bark to lay their eggs. As in the previous case, American elms have no resistance to the fungus and die the same year as they're infected, while European elms might take decades to succumb to



the disease. The result is the same, the virtual elimination of American elms from towns and forests.

But this is History, as my students were fond of saying, by which they meant it's old, passé, and irrelevant to their young lives. OK. Let's be up-to-date! Take the sudden oak death fungus, *Phytophthora ramorum*. This is the same group of fungi which caused the Irish potato famine in the 1840's (oops, there I go again, straying into ancient history!) *Phytophthora* means "plant destroyer" in Greek and never was a name, even in Greek, more apt than this one.

I fear this may be more bad news than some of you can

bear during this rather forlorn season, so I'll continue this in the next issue of The Log.

The Fall, 2006 issue of *Mushroom*, *The Journal of Wild Mushrooming*, has an excellent article on what to look for during the winter thaws, "A Mushroom-collector in Winter", by Bill Bakaitis. Check it out.

## National & More

There will be plenty to insert here come the next newsletter.

Articles for the next newsletter

Deadline – February 29

David Miller  
352 W. College St.  
Oberlin, OH 44074

[David.H.Miller@oberlin.edu](mailto:David.H.Miller@oberlin.edu)

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### Membership Application for the Ohio Mushroom Society

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

CITY \_\_\_\_\_ STATE \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

TELEPHONE \_\_\_\_\_ FAX \_\_\_\_\_

EMAIL ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

Enclosed please find check or money order: \$10.00 (family) annual \_\_\_\_\_ \$125 life \_\_\_\_\_  
enrolling me in the Ohio Mushroom Society. My interests are:

Mushroom Eating/Cookery \_\_\_\_\_ Photography \_\_\_\_\_ Nature Study \_\_\_\_\_

Mushroom ID \_\_\_\_\_ Cultivation \_\_\_\_\_ Other (specify) \_\_\_\_\_

Would you like to be an OMS volunteer? In what way? \_\_\_\_\_

How did you hear about us? \_\_\_\_\_

SIGNATURE \_\_\_\_\_

May OMS provide your name to other mushroom related businesses? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_

Return form and money to: Ohio Mushroom Society, c/o Jerry Pepera, 10489 Barchester Dr., Concord, OH 44077

Reminders: Please send your E-mail and mailing address changes to Jerry Pepera at the above address.

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