



May 20  
General Meeting Speaker



**Ralph Metzner**

*“Mythology and Folklore of Visionary Fungi”*

Ralph Metzner, Ph.D. is a recognized pioneer in psychological, philosophical and cross-cultural studies of consciousness and its transformations. He collaborated with Leary and Alpert in classic studies of psychedelics at Harvard University in the 1960s, co-authored *The Psychedelic Experience* and was editor of *The Psychedelic Review*. He is a psychotherapist and Professor Emeritus at the California Institute of Integral Studies, where he was also the Academic Dean for ten years in the 1980s. His books include *The Unfolding Self*, *The Well of Remembrance*, *Green Psychology*, *The Expansion of Consciousness*, *Alchemical Divination* and *Mind Space and Time Stream*. He is the editor of two collections of essays on the pharmacology, anthropology and phenomenology of ayahuasca and of psilocybin mushrooms. He is also the president and co-founder of the Green Earth Foundation, dedicated to healing and harmonizing the relations between humanity and the Earth.

## MycoDigest: On Waxcaps

Else Vellinga

One of the surprising sights in the North American forests are waxcap species – the colourful members of the genera *Hygrocybe*, *Cuphophyllus*, and *Gliophorus*. I started my mycological career in the Netherlands, where waxcaps grow in grasslands: un-fertilized, non-disturbed, non-production, so-called unimproved grasslands. That runs true for the rest of northwestern Europe; waxcaps grow in grasslands, species of the genus *Hygrophorus* in forests. They are a good indicator species for the grassland's health (health in a biological diversity sense). Such grasslands have become very rare in the last century due to an overwhelming desire to fertilize these mushroom-rich grasslands and change them into uniform production units for cattle; the high levels of nitrogen deposition in general also form a severe threat to this habitat. These grasslands not only sport a fair number of *Hygrocybes*, but also earth tongues, *Clavaria* and *Clavariopsis* species, and *Leptonias* are well represented. All these species can be found here in California in the coastal redwood forests and Monterey cypress plantations in great numbers. Though waxcap species grow in the California forests, they also can be found in



A Parrot Mushroom (*Gliophorus psittacinus*) from the redwood forest

grasslands. One example is a species described by David Largent under the name *Hygrophorus subbasidiosus*: a grey-brown species that nowadays would be placed in *Cuphophyllus*. This was found on a shaded lawn near the biology building on the

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## PRESIDENT'S POST

*Greetings MSSF Members ... for the last time!*

This is my last President's Post since I became President two years ago. I believe I have left the society in a much better position than when I found it, which should be the primary goal of every future President. I could not have accomplished my goals without the help of the MSSF Council Members as well as the numerous past and present volunteers who stepped up to make things happen. I don't plan to go anywhere too soon. I will remain on the Council after David Gardella assumes the duties as President. I also plan to continue as the director of our annual Mendocino Woodlands Foray/Camp until I can find a volunteer willing to step up and relieve me. Our society of over 1000 members consists of a minority of active "doers" and a majority of "regular members." I want to thank all of you who volunteer your time and service to the society, and I want to encourage everyone else to consider volunteering in some capacity in the future. The MSSF remains a 100% volunteer 501(c)3 non-profit organization. Let's keep it that way!

We have an important meeting coming up this month. In the April issue of *Mycena News*, the MSSF council announced the nomination of incoming officers and councilors for the 2014-2015 terms. The election of incoming officers and councilors will be by the majority vote of all the MSSF members present at the May general meeting, provided a quorum is present. I encourage as many members as possible to try and make it to this very important meeting. It is the last one until September.

This is the most recent update on the two biggest burn zones in the Sierra as they relate to possible morel harvesting this year. The American Fire burn zone in the Tahoe National Forest is now open, and collecting permits are being issued for \$20.00, good for two days of your choice, with a limit of 5 pounds per day. The Rim Fire burn zone in the Stanislaus National Forest remains closed until September 2014. However, they are issuing collecting permits for areas of the forest outside of the burn zone. They are free for the first 5 pounds; then there is a fee of \$20.00 for each additional 5 pounds. Finally, permits are being issued in the Eldorado National Forest at a cost of \$20.00 for 40 pounds. Once you purchase it, it is good for the rest of the calendar year.

Our guest speaker in April was Dimitar Bojantchev, his recent talk, entitled "Formal Mycology for Amateurs," was both informative and inspiring. Our May guest speaker will be Ralph Metzner, presenting a talk called "Folklore and Mythology of Visionary Fungi." I am looking forward to his presentation.

*I hope to see many of you in the forest soon, or at a future MSSF event!*

--Curt Haney, [President@MSSF](mailto:President@MSSF)

## CULINARY CORNER

*Carol Hellums, Guest Contributor*

The things we do for the little cone heads. I have rappelled down hillsides too steep to manage unassisted, with my spouse hanging on to the other end of the rope. I've been tossed up equally steep banks without a thought as to how I'd get back down (gravity is effective but painful). I've engaged in some hair-raising rides over muddy, rutted forest roads trying to keep up with Norm, our foray leader, in that damn white van with a back bumper so large you could practically raise a goat in it, and have trudged through hot, dusty moonscapes that loggers have turned to utter desolation, save for the craters where the morels were hiding. And then there was the early-spring foray when our tent collapsed under the weight of the wet spring snow. We got no morels on that foray, but the group had a great time bonding under a jerry-rigged bunch of tarps, eating grilled alligator and a supermarket-brand frozen pie cooked over the campfire.

That was my very first morel foray, more than 20 years ago. It was at Little Nellie Falls on the edge of Yosemite: a gorgeous spot to camp once you got there, but a long way on bad roads. Norm Andresen and Mike Boom were the leaders, and it was a harrowing ride in. But what an abundance of morels. People went out in the dark with flashlights, and came back with bags full. I could barely see the things in the daylight, even when Norm pointed them out. Lacking a good eye for the mushrooms, I stuck close to the leaders, who were kind about letting me and my little knife get in first when they spotted a patch. They gradually educated me to a point where I could occasionally spot a few on my own. It was addictive, as almost anyone reading this probably knows. I've been going back every year since.

And now it's that time again. After a long, dry winter, there have been reports of out-of-season fungi popping out all over the bay area and along the coast – and best of all, it's morel season. But you won't find them in your local supermarket. Our beloved Pat George, the usual Culinary Corner writer, described "moldy, small, nasty morels for an obscene price, \$36 pp" for sale at the Berkeley Bowl. Immoral morels!

But if you're still hungry for more morel information, look no further than the *Mycena News* archive; it's a veritable treasure trove. Lots of recipes. Lots of foraging tips. Lots of memories. Some of my favorite articles have been Bill Freedman's "Don't It Just Burn Ya? How Forest Fires Increase Morel Fruiting" (April 1998), Connie Green's "A Brief Sermon from Miss Morel Manners" (May 1998) and Norm Andresen's "Finding Morels Is Easy: Resources for the Avid Morel Hunter," (February and April 1999). To see more, go to <http://www.mssf.org/mycena-news/issues.html> and take a look around.

## MycoDigest continued

UC Berkeley campus in January, 1939. But fertilizers and constant herbicide spraying have changed the campus lawns into dark green monotonous grassmats. Now, only *Panaeolus foenisecii*, the haymaker's fungus, and *Bolbitius titubans* (sunny-side-up) are regularly found.

As soon as waxcap rich grasslands are treated with fertilizers, herbicides, or other "icides," and as soon as the sheep or cattle that keep the sward short are removed, waxcap species will cease to fruit. It can take years before the original richness in fruitbodies is restored. In the UK, waxcap species have become the flagship of conservation efforts for those grasslands, as they are colourful and easy to recognize as a group and hence highly charismatic.

These fungi raise some interesting questions that have puzzled scientists over the last 10 years. What do they live from? Why are they so sensitive to disturbances such as fertilizers? And how is it possible that these species are grassland species in northern Europe, and yet, do so well in woods and forests in North America?

You have to realize that scientists have not yet discovered how to grow these fungi in culture. Their spores can germinate in the lab, but only a small percentage does so, and only from a few species. *Cuphophyllus virgineus* spores are exceptional in that they germinate in reasonable numbers, and of all waxcaps, this species is the most tolerant to disturbances.

The Northern European grasslands are artificial habitats; they exist only because of management measures such as grazing and mowing. A grassland left alone changes rapidly into a woodland. By looking at grasslands in this way (as thwarted woodlands), forests and grasslands are no longer that different. Waxcap species can then be considered as "leftovers" from the pre-grassland forests.

*Hygrophorus* is a close relative of the grassland waxcap species and its lifestyle is well known. *Hygrophorus* species are truly ectomycorrhizal with various tree species; that is, the mushrooms get their sugars from the tree, and the fungus scavenges for nitrogen, which it will deliver to the tree. The exchange of these goodies takes place in the tree roots, with the fungus growing around and into the roots, but never penetrating into the cells. *Hygrophorus hypothejus* is a typical pine associate, and you will find *H. roseibrunneus* under oaks.

However, it is much less clear how the waxcap species get their carbon and their nitrogen. They are not ectomycorrhizal, as ectomycorrhizal hosts neither occur in these grasslands nor in the redwood forests, and they don't form the typical ectomycorrhizal structures around the roots of trees.

The profiles of nitrogen and carbon (sugars !) uptake of waxcaps differ considerably from those of saprotrophic fungi that break down dead plant material. Waxcaps possibly get their nitrogen from humus, but their sugars come from living plants, just as ectomycorrhizal fungi do.

But which plants could those be?

Two recent studies have looked at plant roots: the roots of grass and the roots of *Plantago lanceolata*. To our surprise, the hyphae of waxcaps were found within these roots. So now it is thought that waxcaps get their sugars from living plants, but not from ectomycorrhizal trees. This is still a theory, as it has not been shown that sugar from the plant ends up in the mushroom.

This idea also leaves lots of room for questions, as waxcaps are found in grasslands and in woodlands. In fact, I don't see grasses in the redwood forest that much, or under Monterey cypress where the *Hygrocybe* photo was taken. But there is always ample

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## FOR THE FLYING MUSHROOMER

**Bob and Barbara Sommer**

Flying is such a drag! Not only do you have to worry about your entire plane going missing, but the simple matter of making a reservation requires running a gauntlet of varying-priced requests. First you have the basic ticket choices (is there really a choice?) – first class (big laugh), business (still laughing) standard, economy, web special (non-desirable times). Then comes the interminable list of money-grabbing options: where to sit, extra legroom, priority boarding, trip insurance, checked baggage – one? two? domestic? overseas? Following an endless scroll, you get the ticket. Remember to bring your credit card with you, because you cannot pay cash for drinks, food, headphones, movie, or WiFi. You wonder when they will install a card swipe on the toilet door.

To make a small dent in the nickel-and-dime scam, we decided to go carry-on. Hey, it saved \$50 each round trip. But here's the rub. The essential implement on any mushroom foray is a knife. All the other paraphernalia— special brush, hand lens, camera, walking stick, waxed paper, field guide, and DNA test kit — are merely useful supplements, provided space is available. The single one of those items that cannot be carried aboard an aircraft is the indispensable knife. That leaves the frugal forager travelling by air in a bind. Many of us have already lost at least one Swiss Army knife to TSA inspectors. The Gatehouse Gallery at the di Rosa in the Napa Valley displays a large sculpture made entirely from sharp implements seized at local airports. We arrived knifeless in Mexico.

How difficult could it be to purchase a pocketknife near our hotel in town? Plenty difficult. The Spanish word for pocketknife proved elusive. All we knew was the generic “cuchillo” for knife. We had to show a rough pocketknife drawing to shopkeepers for even a glimmer of understanding. Many types of cutlery were offered for sale, but none could be carried safely in purse or pocket, unless you want to sing those high notes and carry a supply of bandages. We visited the large public market, and walked up and down aisles listening to earsplitting pirated CDs without finding anything suitable. Everyone we asked directed us to the kitchenware stalls. Turns out that not many Mexican cooks use pocketknives. We finally settled on two small, serrated, wood-handled kitchen knives with the saving feature of cardboard blade covers. Our fellow checked-bag mushroomers pulled out their smart-looking multi-bladed folding knives. We foraged with pathetic kitchen knives.

The absence of a pocketknife was felt at meals and at snack time. Not only were we unable to open bottles (not to mention wine), but we also lacked a pair of tiny scissors for plastic-wrapped packets of dried fruit. We could not slice an apple or cut an orange. We lacked tweezers for removing splinters. We felt, if not helpless, at least handicapped.

On our return, we decided to abandon the economy of carry-on. Although our suitcases would fit into the overhead racks, we would never again be knifeless in a foreign land. We had no intention of fighting off pickpockets or terrorists with pocketknives. It's a matter of convenience and practical utility. We entered the complicated and sometimes risky world of “checked baggage” – a world requiring arriving earlier and leaving later than the folks with carry-on.

As we wait at the carousel for our checked baggage, we look for the little room nearby where one registers lost items, trying to recall the size, color, and shape of our suitcase and backpack. Our luggage might be en route to some exotic location. It will hopefully show up in a day or two. Baggage theft continues apace at airports across the United States. Police in Los Angeles recently broke up a ring of as many as 25 service employees who were rifling through checked suitcases looking for items to steal ... but probably not pocketknives.



A knife is your best friend in the field:  
Don't leave home without it

## Culinary Corner continued

“A Taste of Chile” was the theme of the April Culinary Club Dinner. “During the summer, on those rare occasions when the sun shines full-force in southern Chile,” our captains, Maria Keenan, Jim Keenan, and Kelda Rinkleib described, “the people make *curantos* (the Chilean version of a Hawaiian luau) in their backyards and on their nearby beaches. But when cold rain pours incessantly all over, this meal is brought indoors, where it is sealed in a pot and becomes a *pulmai*. This clambake consists of pork, chicken, sausage, fish, shrimp, clams, mussels, potatoes, onions, red peppers, cumin, white wine, and parsley, cooked together in one pot. Each layer is separated by cabbage leaves.”

In addition to the *pulmai* (which our captains cooked with mushrooms) the dinner featured a tomato-onion *ensalada Chilena* (Liz Scotia), celery-avocado *ensalada de Apio con Palta* (Ellen Burkhart and Kristina Gale), *Panqueques Celestinos*, better known as dulce de leche crepes (Jeanette Larsen and David Eichorn) as well as a delicious array of mushroom appetizers prepared by the Culinary Group members. Congratulations and thanks to all the cooks. It was a fabulous introduction to a cuisine with which most of us aren't familiar.

### Flaming Chicken with Port, Cream, and Morels

- |  |                      |
|--|----------------------|
| - 1 roast chicken, about 3 lbs.                | - 1/3 cup tawny port |
| - 1 lb. fresh morels, or equivalent dried      | - 1 teaspoon salt    |
| - ¼ c. water or morel soaking liquid, strained | - Lemon juice        |
| - 1 c. heavy cream                             | - ½ T. butter        |
| - ½ T. cornstarch                              | - ¼ c. cognac        |
| - ½ T. minced shallots                         |                      |

If using dried morels, reconstitute them in hot water. Sauté the morels in a mixture of butter and olive oil (or use chicken fat) until well cooked.

In the roasting pan, remove all but 2 T. of fat. Stir in the shallots and cook slowly for a minute, then add the port, ¼ cup of the mushroom soaking liquid (or water if using fresh morels), and reduce to about ¼ cup. Add the mushrooms, cream, and cornstarch (mixed with a little cold cream) and simmer 2 – 3 minutes, until it thickens slightly. Season to taste with salt, pepper, and a little lemon juice.

Butter a casserole with the ½ T. of butter. Cut up the chicken and arrange it in the casserole.

Set the casserole over moderate heat until the chicken begins to sizzle. Pour the cognac over it. Light the cognac and shake the casserole until the flames subside. Pour in the mushroom and cream mixture, stir, cover, let it sit for 5 minutes over low heat (do not let it boil) and serve.

## HOSPITALITY COMMITTEE THANKS CURT HANEY

The Hospitality Committee thanks our president, Curt Haney, who, in addition to carrying out his weighty administrative responsibilities, also stepped up to make appetizers for the March 18 hospitality hour. Curt presented three iconic edibles:

- **Colorado porcini** (*Boletus edulis*)
- **Colorado chanterelles** (*Cantharellus cibarius*)
- **Lion's Mane** (*Hereticium erinaceus*)

He prepared them simply and deftly, sautéing them in butter and salt in order to give us direct access to their subtle and distinctive flavors.

YOU TOO can be a guest chef at a hospitality function at some point of your choosing in the future. Just email one of your Hospitality co-chairs:

Eric: [mullew@comcast.net](mailto:mullew@comcast.net)

George: [gwillis2@mac.com](mailto:gwillis2@mac.com)

to let us know of your interest.



## MycDigest continued

poison oak around; could that be the source of sugars for the waxcaps? Mosses have also been postulated as sugar providers, and that might be the case in grasslands, or in mossy eastern North American forests. But look again at the photo of the Monterey cypress waxcap to the right, where mosses are definitely absent.

One other piece of information that might be relevant is that many species in the family Hygrophoraceae are lichens, in which the fungus forms a symbiosis with green algae (this is the case for *Lichenomphalia*), or with cyanobacteria (tropical *Dictyonema* species). The algae and cyanobacteria are enslaved by the fungi to provide the sugars on which the fungus thrives. Moss-inhabiting *Arrhenia* species are in this same family, but also the beautiful lilac-gilled wood-inhabiting *Chromosera lilacifolia* which looks and behaves like a true saprotrophic fungus.

So, instead of getting clear answers on the questions about the ecology of the waxcaps, we are confronted with a plethora of nutrition modes within one natural group of fungi and more questions about the evolutionary history and the biology of these fungi than ever.

There is quite a list of articles that delve into the various aspects of the Hygrophoraceae, plus a few websites that give information. I want to point you to two papers that are relevant for aspects other than ecology: The first is on the phylogeny of the whole family (by Lodge et al., 2014). The second is a small article that studied some closely related British waxcap species in depth. These species differ in colours, but are for the rest very similar. A small part of DNA of differently coloured specimens was compared; this particular piece of DNA does not cause the different colours, and yet, there is a correlation between colour and the signature in this part of the DNA. So far two new species were described based on this study. DNA variation among different parrot mushrooms (*Gliophorus psittacinus*) was also detected, and this might have implications for the names we use for the western species. We have probably several species of parrots, and none the same as in Europe!

**Further reading:**

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- Lodge, DJ, et al., 2014. Molecular phylogeny, morphology, pigment chemistry and ecology in Hygrophoraceae (Agaricales). *Fungal Diversity* 64: 1–99. [open access]
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- Tell SA, Silva-Flores P, Agerer R, Halbwachs H, Beck A, Peršoh D. *Hygrocybe virginea* is a systemic endophyte of *Plantago lanceolata*. *Mycological progress* DOI 10.1007/s11557-013-0928-0
- <http://www.kew.org/news/conserving-british-waxcap-fungi.htm>
- <http://www.aber.ac.uk/waxcap/index.shtml> : very useful web site with lots of links



A waxcap (*Hygrocybe*)  
from a Monterey cypress planting forest

**About the Author:**

Else Vellinga works at the herbarium of UC Berkeley on the digitization of the fungal collections, and does mycological research in the Bruns lab at UC Berkeley. She is interested in systematics, taxonomy, and ecology the fleshy fungi of California and beyond. She loves parasol mushrooms (*Lepiotas*) but has also published on elfin saddles, *Suillus*, and *Paxillus* species.



## MSSF THANKS OUTGOING *MYCENA NEWS* EDITOR, BROTHER MARK FOLGER

I want to give a special thank you to past Council Member and outgoing editor of the *Mycena News*, Brother Mark Folger. Brother Mark assumed the duties as editor of *Mycena News* starting with the September 2012 edition. He did an excellent job maintaining our newsletter as a professional and informative publication. It is because of Brother Mark that you are reading this edition of *Mycena News* in color, an invaluable improvement that has allowed us to share the excitement and mystery of mycology with our readers.

About six months ago, Brother Mark, who is a Franciscan Friar, was suddenly recalled to Rome, Italy, but he continued on as the newsletter editor while the Council searched for a replacement. Early this year, MSSF member India Mandelkern volunteered to assume the editorial position; she is now the official editor of *Mycena News*. Welcome to the Council India, and again, thank you Brother Mark for all your past hard work on our great newsletter which keeps all MSSF members connected.

-- Curt Haney



## WE CALL HIM THE MUSHROOM WHISPERER...

Cameron Fisher, a seventh grader at Stanley Middle School in Lafayette and one of the MSSF's youngest members, loves nothing better than to spend a day foraging for fungi. He has a true passion for it. In fact, he knows more about the subject than many adults! On a recent walk in the Oakland Hills he found an impressive bunch of Porcinis. This one weighed close five pounds!

Risotto anyone?

## The Greening of the MSSF

The MSSF council is striving to make our society the first green non-profit mycological society in the country. Printing the newsletters takes trees out of circulation and can also affect mushrooms in the process. We are already making great progress. Two years ago, when I was elected as the current President, the MSSF was printing and mailing 300 copies of *Mycena News* per month. As of April 2014, we have reduced this number to just 104; that's a two thirds reduction. Here is what else you can do to help make the MSSF a greener society:

- Convert to e-membership and start receiving the *Mycena News* electronically.
- Use the MSSF website, online calendar, and Yahoo group for up-to-date information, local and long distance foraging reports, and future fungi related special events.
- Practice low impact foraging methods, which leads to sustainable mushrooming
- Utilize the MSSF website rideshare program, or the MSSF Yahoo Group to organize carpooling

Contact the current membership chair at: [membership@MSSF.org](mailto:membership@MSSF.org) to sign-up for paperless newsletters!

Mycological Society of San Francisco  
c/o The Randall Museum  
199 Museum Way  
San Francisco, CA 94114



"A World of Wonder at Your Feet"

May 2014, vol. 65:09

## MSSF Calendar May 2014

**May 2-4 - Morel Foray**  
Pines NFS Campground, Groveland

**Monday, May 5, 7 p.m. Culinary Group Dinner**  
County Fair Building, Golden Gate Pk., 9th & Lincoln, S.F.  
"Caribbean Feast." Pre-registration required for attendance. See calendar section at [www.mssf.org](http://www.mssf.org). Email [culinary@mssf.org](mailto:culinary@mssf.org) to volunteer.

**Tuesday, May 15, 7:30 p.m. MSSF Council Meeting**

**Tuesday, May 20, 7 p.m. MSSF General Meeting and Elections**  
Randall Museum, 199 Museum Way, San Francisco.  
7 p.m. - Mushroom identification and refreshments.  
8 p.m. - Speaker: Ralph Metzner

The election of officers and councilors will take place at the Annual Meeting, to be conducted during the general meeting scheduled on May 20, 2014 at 8pm.

Check the MSSF online calendar at:  
<http://www.mssf.org/calendar/index.php>  
for full details, latest updates  
and schedule changes.

## MSSF Volunteers Needed

Join the Council leadership, learn the inner workings of the MSSF and help make decisions that shape the future of the society. Do your part by contributing your time to a 100% volunteer organization!

To learn more about all council and committee positions, go to: [www.mssf.org](http://www.mssf.org) members-only area, file archives, council member position descriptions. Or email [president@mssf.org](mailto:president@mssf.org).

MSSF council members have nominated the following MSSF members as the incoming society officers and councilors for the 2014-2015 term:

President:	David Gardella
Vice President:	Brennan Wenck
Treasurer:	Henry Shaw
Secretary:	Eric Multhaup
Councilors: (1 year term)	Tyler Taunton
(2 year term)	Jackie Shay and Joe Soeller

Submit to *Mycena News*! The submission deadline for the September 2014 issue is August 15th. Send all articles, calendar items and other information to: [mycenanews@mssf.org](mailto:mycenanews@mssf.org)