



# THE KEYSTONE CAP

Newsletter of the Eastern Penn Mushroomers  
www.epennmushroomers.org

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## **IN THIS ISSUE**

President's Message  
Finding the Mother Tree  
Fungi Series at Horn Farm  
Northeast Rare Fungi Challenge  
A Poem on Morels  
Spring Forays  
Helen Miknis Memorial Foray  
Morel Quiche Recipe  
EPM Annual Photo Contest

## **COMMUNICATIONS**

### **President:**

Tom Warman  
717-873-2679  
[tom@tomwarman.com](mailto:tom@tomwarman.com)

### **Vice Pres & Program Chair:**

Mike Mettler  
484-432-4757  
[Mmettler8522@gmail.com](mailto:Mmettler8522@gmail.com)

### **Treasurer/Membership:**

Josh Huber  
717-742-8193  
[jhubermyco@gmail.com](mailto:jhubermyco@gmail.com)

### **Director at Large:**

Cheryl Dawson  
717-846-1225  
[Daws1cheryl@comcast.net](mailto:Daws1cheryl@comcast.net)

### **Foray Chairs & Recorders:**

Niles Lavin 717-608-8811  
[nileslavin@gmail.com](mailto:nileslavin@gmail.com)  
Karen Beall 717-679-0475  
[karenrichbeall@gmail.com](mailto:karenrichbeall@gmail.com)  
George Morrison 717-515-5774  
[accomac0222@gmail.com](mailto:accomac0222@gmail.com)  
Roseann Sachs 717-855-6187  
[rsachs@messiah.edu](mailto:rsachs@messiah.edu)  
John Dawson  
[jw7too@comcast.net](mailto:jw7too@comcast.net)

### **Webmaster:**

Lynn Nelson 717-757-4980  
[lynnnelson104@gmail.com](mailto:lynnnelson104@gmail.com)

### **Newsletter Editor:**

Ariane Litzel 717-621-1515  
[ari.kusala@gmail.com](mailto:ari.kusala@gmail.com)

### **Culinary Coordinator:**

Andrew Kimbrel  
[Akimbrel370@gmail.com](mailto:Akimbrel370@gmail.com)

## **President's Message** by Tom Warman

“Spring Ahead”

If you are like me, this is the time of year that you find yourself thinking of what is to come. The dark days of winter are behind us. Day length expands almost exponentially. The sun's rays seem brighter and more intense. All of which is enough to make me giddy with anticipation.

We have just ended our club's fantastic winter speaker meetings (thank you Mike Mettler). You have paid your club dues for 2024 (if not, see Josh Huber) and the list of spring foray dates and locations is about to be posted (fingers crossed, Niles Lavin and Karen Beall). We begin to dust off our mushroom collection gear, or at least think about it.

And, we begin to put our minds in mushroom-hunting mode. A former club member once told me that each spring she retrained her eyes for foraging by tossing small sponges around her house which forced her to look downward in order to find them. Now that is anticipation!

Personally, I look forward to seeing which fungi are 'hot' or 'not' this year. I look forward to the thrill of finding something I have never seen before. I look forward to learning more about ID through touching, tasting, and smelling than by just seeing digital images. And I look forward to hanging out with you and other club members on our forays. How about you?

Until next time,  
Tom

## **Finding the Mother Tree: Discovering the Wisdom of the Forest** Book Review submitted by Roseann K. Sachs

*Finding the Mother Tree: Discovering the Wisdom of the Forest* (2021), by Suzanne Simard is a New York Times bestseller book that contributed to the popularization of the notion of the “wood-wide web.” This book is both memoir and science, tracing the Canadian author's interactions with her family and the forests of British Columbia, her entry into the field as a rare woman forester, and ultimately, her research into the relationship between fungi and trees in transporting nutrients underground. Her experiments began with an examination of the practice of clear-cutting forests, and replanting single species, but then extended to the interactions between trees, which she believes occur through the mycelial network of fungi. Her work tracking the transport of carbon isotopes back-and-forth between fir and birch trees was published in *Nature* and was attributed to the underground fungal network, given the controls she set in place to eliminate transfer just through the soil. It was in fact the editors of that journal that coined the term “wood wide web,” and not the author herself. This paper, as

## **SAVE THE DATES**

Mark your calendars so you don't miss these FUNgi activities.

### **EPM 2024 Spring Forays**

Saturday April 27, 2024  
Saturday May 4, 2024  
Saturday May 11, 2024  
Saturday May 18, 2024  
Saturday June 1, 2024  
Saturday June 15, 2024

### **Helen Miknis Memorial Foray**

August 2<sup>nd</sup> – August 4<sup>th</sup>, 2024

Watch your email inbox for notification of additional events.

## **FUNGI IN THE NEWS**

### **The Great Morel!**

<https://www.thegreatmorel.com>

This fantastic source offers link exchanges and continues to “scour the depths of the world wide morel web in search of morel and mushroom sites in order to place a realm of information at your fingertips.”

### **Rare Truffles Found**

<https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2024/apr/12/rare-truffle-find-scottish-spruce-forest-sends-fungus-experts-alien-species-hunt>

Naturalists have found a very globally rare type of truffle living in a Scottish forestry plantation.

### **Zombie Cicadas**

<https://greenmatters.com/news/zombie-cicadas>

Experts warn fungus will turn cicadas into sexually aggressive “zombies.”

well as others, prompted skepticism both from foresters, who didn't want to adapt their clear-cutting and reseeded practices based on her research, and from scientists and academics. The book continues to weave her most important scientific experiments (some in pretty extensive detail), her interactions with skeptical colleagues, and her personal life into one seamless story.

Her designation of “mother trees,” trees that “make decisions” to give of their own resources through the underground mycelial network to their own “kin,” came at a time in her life where she herself was dealing with a devastating cancer diagnosis and the harsh treatment for it. Her research has been criticized by numerous biologists, claiming that she essentially stretched her data to anthropomorphize trees; to assign them traits previously reserved for humans. The book is ultimately more about trees than it is about fungi, but presents the thesis that the entire forest is interwoven, and that there is much more cooperation amongst individual organisms, and species, for the good of the whole, rather than the forest being an entirely competitive environment that allows only for the “survival of the fittest.”

## **Fungi Series at Horn Farm**

EPM club members Niles Lavin and Ariane Leitzel have again been invited to conduct a series of classes and workshops at Horn Farm in June of 2024. We welcome *any* club members who would like to help us facilitate these classes. The subject content will include: Introduction to Mycology, Fungi Cultivation, and Medicinal/Culinary uses of Mushrooms.



Please contact Ari at [ari.kusala@gmail.com](mailto:ari.kusala@gmail.com) if you'd like to assist!

Details for the series (including registration) will be released soon on Horn Farm's website: <https://hornfarmcenter.org/classes/>

## **Northeast Rare Fungi Challenge** submitted by Hannah Huber

Hi! I'm a new EPMC member, and hearing of the call for newsletter content, I thought I'd take the opportunity to introduce myself as the Pennsylvania Natural Heritage Program's new conservation mycologist, having started in the position in November. As a quick about me – I was born into Michigan morel hunting, and in 2010 in the Adirondacks I met mushroom dyer Susan Hopkins who opened my eyes to the field of mycology. I took mycology courses throughout my studies at Paul Smith's College and SUNY ESF, including with mycoorhizologist Dr. Tom Horton, and I've worked in the lab and herbarium settings.





Pennsylvania has over 6,000 documented species of fungi. Three species were recorded in the state just last year - the river-swimming *Psathyrella aquatica* found by Tim and Darlene Corio with assistance from Garrett Taylor, the liverwort symbiote *Loreleia marchantiae* found by my PNHP colleague Noah Yawn, and Mandie Quark found *Thaxterogaster frondosomultiformis*, which had previously only been documented in northern Italy. I can't wait to see what people find this year!

I work closely with the [Mycology and Protists Technical Committee](#) of the Pennsylvania Biological Survey. Together, we are sifting through the 6,000+ species, finding ones that are underdocumented and associated with declining habitat, and preparing to assess them against conservation concern criteria. In the near

future, I will be developing a fungi presence on the [Pennsylvania Natural Heritage Program website](#), and materials on both rare and introduced species (looking at you, *Amanita phalloides* and *Pleurotus citrinopileatus*) will be forthcoming.

In the meantime, if you're not already familiar with the [Fungal Diversity Survey's Northeast Rare Fungi Challenge](#) (and [iNaturalist project](#)), I suggest you sleep with the poster of the Challenge's 20 species under your pillow. Seven of these regionally-rare species have been documented in PA so far, and the rest are waiting to meet you.

I'm also looking forward to meeting you! Consider me a resource, and interested in your insights on rare species and fungal conservation anytime. Feel free to drop me a line at [c-hhuber@pa.gov](mailto:c-hhuber@pa.gov), or I'll see you soon at a foray!

### **The Magic of Morels** submitted by Ari Leitzel

The season is upon us! What a great feeling to step outside and see the vibrant flowers, blooming trees, and to know morels are fruiting across Pennsylvania. I'm sure many of us have our treasured 'honey holes' and can share some wonderful and perhaps amusing stories of our past quests for the treat. I spent much of my childhood exploring the foothills in Elizabethville. In the forest of E-ville, near my grandparents' home, a mysterious gentlemen built a village of teepees in the early 90's for everyone to enjoy, and there's a fresh spring nearby! It's a magical little space, and so nice it is still so carefully maintained. On a hunch, I thought maybe it would be fruitful to explore this space for *morchellas*. Last year, I was able to find a tiny little morel peaking out from the leaf litter. While it wasn't anything near edible, it did give me hope.

A few weeks ago, I convinced my partner to take the long drive to check the spot. We are so grateful we did! A full basket and two huge smiles, it was such a great reminder to listen to our intuition and always practice patience! This exciting season always compels me to research the history and folklore of the delicious species. In this year's endeavor, I found the website [www.thegreatmorel.com](http://www.thegreatmorel.com). The website is an excellent source for morel enthusiasts. Below is a poem shared on this website. I hope it helps inspire everyone to go out for a hunt.



Oh, the gems of spring  
Buried in the woods;  
Seeking the Morel's  
Precious royal hoods.  
And, like treasure maps,  
Such legends abound;  
Where fifty beneath  
An elm tree were found.  
They're worth all the interest  
And energy spent,  
And little white lies  
Of just where one went.  
And worth all the rinsing  
Of bugs and grit sands  
Just for that taste...  
Of sautéed woodlands.

*Courtesy of Mary Zeller (2023)*

## Helen Miknis Memorial Foray

The fun(gi)-filled annual event will take place at the Mont Alto campus of Penn State University the weekend of August 2nd to the 4th. Always a treasured shared experience, the lush Michaux and Tuscarora state forests provide a variety of habitats in the state parks and game lands that are lined up along Pennsylvania's share of South Mountain and the Tuscarora Ridge.

More details to come via Groups.io and our website, <https://www.epennmushroomers.org/>

## Morel Quiche

Found in "Joe's Book of Mushroom Cookery" by Jack Czarnecki, this recipe is a delicious illustration of one of the principles of cooking with morels: always use green peppers when preparing them.



- 1 9-inch piecrust
- 1 small onion, chopped
- ½ small green pepper, chopped
- 2 tablespoons melted butter
- ½ lb fresh morels
- ½ cup heavy cream
- ¼ cup milk
- 2 eggs
- 1 tsp salt
- 1 tsp sugar
- 1 tablespoon soy sauce

Preheat oven to 450 degrees.

Prebake pie shell for 10 minutes. In a saucepan, sauté the onions and green peppers in the butter for 2 minutes. Add the mushrooms and continue to sauté for another 2 minutes. Fresh morels will give off liquid at this point. Pour it off while you are sautéing the mushrooms and save to use for the extract. Combine the morel extract, cream, milk, eggs, salt, sugar, and soy sauce and mix well, making sure the eggs are thoroughly blended together with the rest of the ingredients. Fill the pie shell with the onions, peppers, mushrooms, and cover with the custard. Bake pie at 450 degrees for 10 minutes and then lower the heat to 350 degrees and continue baking for another 20 minutes. Check for doneness by piercing with a

fork. If liquid custard is still on the fork, continue to bake for another 5 minutes, then check again. Repeat if necessary. Remove pie from oven and let cool for a 1/2 hour before serving.

## EPMC Annual Photo Contest



Jonathan Jensen, 1st place 2023  
*Aesthetics & Composition*

Spring is here and mushrooms are popping up. Snap some pics of your fungal finds and share them on Groups.io and you will automatically be entered into EPM's annual photo contests. In the past, the contest was limited to the fall but now will begin in the spring and last through the fall.

There will be two categories with three winners in each category. First place winners will receive fifty dollars, second place twenty-five, and third place a free one-year membership. The first category will be judged on photos that are aesthetically pleasing and the second category will be judged on photos that best describe the mushroom. In the latter mentioned category more than one photo can be posted with features that help identify the mushrooms from the photos. The only rule is the photos must be posted on Groups.io and taken this year. The contest starts now, and winners will be posted in the winter newsletter.