Despite a fairly severe drought, members found a very wide array of fungi this past season, and many were eager to share their finds when we put out the call. Devorah Levy photographed this beautiful group of *Psathyrella piluliformis*. See article beginning on page 3 for more member contributions.

**Virtual Educational Sessions**

All of our members should have received an email recently from Dianna Smith with information about our new venture. We are collaborating with several other mycology clubs to sponsor educational talks that our members can access via Zoom. There have been several already, and they were excellent. We are so excited to be able to offer this to our members, since we can’t as yet schedule any of our normal educational activities, including the spring series of Fungi Kingdom University lectures. Watch your email for updates regarding talks that will be scheduled in the upcoming months!
From the President...

Another year has come and gone ... and yikes, what a year it was. Usually, I get to summarize all of the activities we’ve done together over the past year and ramble on about all of the great things we’ve got planned. Unfortunately, we still will not be able to offer Fungi Kingdom University this coming spring. But despite the challenges of 2020, all hope is not lost. This year, I remain hopeful that we’ll be able to gather in some capacity to study mushrooms together. For instance, we’ve already added, with the support of other Northeast clubs, opportunities to learn about fungi and fungi-related topics via online presentations.

This issue of the newsletter includes some of the great finds from the past season that members encountered while staying connected to fungi on their own. A big thank you to all of the folks who submitted photos! We love to have member-submitted content for our newsletter and we always welcome it!

In the coming months, we’ll have more information about the safety of gathering for mushroom walks and will plan accordingly. For now, know that I miss all of you very much and can’t wait for the day when we can meet in-person again.

- Jessica

Please Vote!!!

Early in 2020, club members gathered at our annual meeting to vote on several key items. We had no idea of the coming global pandemic, but we all voted on a motion that would end up being invaluable for our club’s ongoing operation. Members voted to allow online/email voting for elected positions on the club’s Board of Directors, and the motion passed with unanimous support.

This year, voting for our club’s elected positions will take place via an online poll, which will be delivered to your email inbox in the coming days. The nominations approved by the board are the following:

- President: Jessica Evans
- Treasurer: Michael Ostrowski
- Secretary: Stephanie Reitman

Mary Obrutz has another year remaining in her term as vice president.

You can learn more about the individuals up for election through reading their biographies, which are online on our club web site. You may also write in another candidate for any of the positions of you so choose.

When you receive the online voting poll via email, please be sure to take part. It is a very simple, anonymous process. We need a quorum of members, or a specific number of votes, to make our elections valid for the coming terms. Your participation is vital to the everyday workings of our club!

If you have any questions about our elections, terms of office, or our club by-laws, please reach out via email to JessicaBensonEvans@gmail.com.
Member Photos from the Past Season

Because we couldn’t gather in person last collecting season, we thought it would be fun if members would share one or two of their favorite finds. Even though we suffered a drought, you still found an amazing variety of fungi. Below are the images with the best IDs we could give them. Thanks to all who shared!

Hypomyces luteovirens
Mike Ostrowski

Neofavolus alveolaris
Bill Yule

Boletus edulis group
Alison O’Hare

Omphalotus illudens
Bill Hall

Phallus ravenellii
Andrea Dustin

Lycoperdon pyriforme
Claus Schlund

Hypholoma lateritium
Helen Petros
Plicaturopsis crispa

Merulius tremellosus

Sarcomyxa serotina

Cantharellus cinnabarinus

Amanita jacksonii

Multiple species

Baorangia bicolor
Books

Appalachian Mushrooms: A Field Guide
Walter E. Sturgeon
Ohio University Press 2018
Paperback on Amazon is $35
Kindle Version is $19.99

Review by Dianna Smith

Walt Sturgeon is a well-regarded field mycologist familiar to NAMA members and others who participate in any of the major annual multiday forays that take place especially east of North America’s Rocky Mountains. He is at the top of everyone’s invitation wish list of favorite guest mycologists invited to give illustrated talks on various mycological topics, and especially for his expertise in identifying fungi for the display tables. His photographs of fungi have graced several recently published field guides and are often among the most spectacular that can be found on mushroom Facebook forums. He has co-authored three mushroom field guides, but this is his first solo contribution.

The book itself is over 500 pages in length, including concise cautionary remarks about eating unidentified fungi, brief instructions on mushroom identification and on using the book. Included descriptions start with the scientific name of the fungus, synonyms, common names if any, and the mushroom’s family association. The author covers details of the cap, flesh, spore-producing surface, stem, spore print, ecology, edibility and informative comments. The lower third of each page features the described fungus in a photo that shows the cap and hymenium. I suspect that the photos given to the publishers to accompany the descriptions were originally brighter than they appear in print. Rounding out its offerings is a succinct glossary of mycological terms used, a partial list of mushroom organizations, a short list of references, an index of scientific names, and an index of common names.

It is always interesting to see how different authors organize
the placement of the various macro-fungi treated their books. Given that potential readers will have different abilities with respect to their familiarity with fungi, it is not an easy task. One can use fungal shape, size, cap color, family, genus, function, habitat, substrate or spore color, among several other possibilities to arrange their selections for publication. Authors have employed a variety of categories, often artificial, to enable curious mushroom hunters to find detailed information on particular fungi.

The book is divided into two main sections: gilled mushrooms and fungi without gills. The gilled mushroom sections are further organized by spore color: white-spored and colored-spored. Users of the field guide will be required to make spore prints of their finds rather than try to simply match them with the mushrooms described and depicted in the book. Instructions for doing so are given at the beginning of the book. These start with notes on general distinguishing features and descriptions of select species of Amanita, Russula, Lactarius, and Lactifluus. Four additional sections on white-spored mushrooms, differentiated by overall size, texture and substrate follow. Waxy cap mushrooms are divided into two parts: medium to large with a waxy feel (Hygrophorus), and small with a waxy texture (Gliophorus, Hygrocybe, and Humidiclitus). The author follows with descriptions of medium to large Melanoleuca and Tricholoma. The remaining described fungi are in the category termed "Other White-spored Mushrooms" such as Macrolepiota, Ossicula, Armillaria, Pleurocybe, Mycena, Gymnopus, Marasmius, Schizphyllum, and so on.

The next part of the field guide is devoted to colored-spored mushrooms ranging from salmon pink (Clitopus, Entoloma, Pluteus, Rhodocollybia and Volvariella) to brown (Agrocybe, Bolbitius, Conocybe, Crepidotus, Galerina, Hebeloma, Inocybe, Simocybe, and Tapinella), and finally purple-brown to black (Agaricus, Coprinellus, Corinopsis, Coprinus, Gomphidius, Hypholoma, Lacrymaria, Psathyrella, and Stropharia).

The subsequent part of Appalachian Mushrooms has separate sections on boletes, polypores, chanterelles and allies, club and coral-like fungi, spine fungi, puffballs and other gastromycetes, cup-shaped and resupinate fungi, gelatinous and rubbery fruiting bodies, and ends with descriptions of morels and gyromiters. Each of the various sections conveniently begins with keys for finding fungi included in the descriptions. They are relatively easy to use. Missing is any information on spore shape and size. This won't be a problem for those of us who mainly want to know which fungi are edible and which are not, or (perhaps foolishly) trust our observation skills and have little patience for microscopic analysis. While it purports to focus on fungi of the Appalachians from Canada through Georgia, nearly all of the mushrooms described in this book can also be found on either side of the mountain range.

This field guide will be useful to both hikers and foragers interested in adding another good identification guide to their mycological library. The decision to devote a full page for the description and photo of each fungus will be appreciated, especially by more mature folks with vision challenges. Appalachian Mushrooms is one of many recently published field guides to fungi of the eastern half of North America. I don't think we can have too many. It is always useful and informative to read them for the unique perspective each affords us.

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**In Search of Mycotopia:**

**Citizen Science, Fungi Fanatics, and the Untapped Potential of Mushrooms**

Doug Bierend  
Chelsea Green Publishing  
Hardcover $34.95  
Publishing Date: March 10, 2021

**Review by Dianna Smith**

Most mycophiles are aware that there a growing number of younger folks entering mycology who have been especially inspired by the writings and TED Talks of world-renowned myco-evangelist Paul Stamets. The charismatic Pied Piper of practical mycology has had a similar effect on many of us "old timers" as well as on the generations of young idealists born after ours. Few of us are unmoved by the extraordinary accomplishments of the founder of FungiPerfecti. The closing slide of his presentations reveal an image of branching mycelium reaching out from the earth's organisms into the cosmos, presumably connecting every planet, star and galaxy within a complex, integrated and unified web of communication. Seeing it elicits rounds of heartfelt applause. Unsurprisingly, nature journalist Doug Bierend was also captivated by Stamets’ Ted talks.

Bierend’s initial contact with adherents of mycology committed to effecting solutions to our ongoing and worsening environmental problems, though, was through meeting entrepreneur mushroom cultivator Olga Tsoagas. She is founder of Smugtown Mushrooms in Rochester, N.Y. and collaborator of Mycelium Underground. The latter is nation-wide community of mostly women, one of a growing number of informal social communities with unconventional names like Decolonize Fungi, Female and Fungi, Fungi for the People, and the Radical Mycology Convergence, among other anti-establishment monks. Olga and friends introduced the author to woodland macro fungi, their myriad morphologies and modes of survival. That initial experience led Bierend and his wife to make contact with similarly infatuated enthusiasts. He set out to learn why they are engaged in promoting widespread knowledge about the hidden world of fungi, encouraging each other to learn
cultivation techniques, and conducting experiments designed to effect solutions to environmental problems. His emergent passion for mycology and curiosity about what drives the friendly, diverse and idiosyncratic folks involved in these endeavors were his reasons for writing his first book. It is about principally young amateur mycologists, their motivations and beliefs for propagating widespread commitment to "saving the Earth" with fungi.

Bierend interviewed many individuals with names familiar to members of established mushroom organizations associated with NAMA, such as Alan Rockefeller, Christian Schwarz, William Padilla-Brown, Tradd Cotter, Bill Sheehan, Peter McCoy and others. Some of these talented individuals are involved with the Fungal Diversity Survey (FunDis) and have been actively promoting citizen science to expedite and facilitate the documentation and collection of native fungal species. This activity involves learning how to properly observe, photograph and record fungal finds, engage in genetic sequencing, and preserving these materials along with related specimens in a university, botanical or home fungaria. The program evolved in concert with professionals and amateurs and has helped foster closer amateur ties with university mycology professionals. Mycology is unusual in being a field of science that is open to and that can benefit from the collaborative efforts of amateur amateurs working in concert with professionals. Most of the above-mentioned are also involved in propagating the message that nearly all forms of life are dependent on the ignored fungi kingdom. Having evolved over millions of years via mutualisms with other organisms, fungi are seen as undervalued decomposers, and distributors of nutrients.

While Bierend spends a fair amount of time elucidating the ambitions that drive the above-mentioned devotees of amateur mycology, his research has exposed an uncomfortable fact that established mycological organizations have come to recognize. Most contemporary myco-advocates have limited direct connections with the major mycological associations that first sprung to life in the 1960's and 1970's. Like the some of the founders of the early mycological clubs, many of today's myco trailblazers have been fundamentally inspired to learn more about fungal lifestyles after experiencing untethered connections to life with mind-expanding psychedelic mushrooms. Some have been exposed to the myriad hobbies and activities involving fungi via the annual Telluride Fungi Festival, known for its speakers, forays, carnival-like parades, art, dye workshops, culinary workshops and its magic mushrooms. Others have caught the myco-bug from mushroom cultivators, and from myco-social activists like Peter McCoy. He has communicated with potential adherents via his books, talks and presence on social media and has organized many Radical Convergence festivals to draw in folks searching for meaningful ways to pursue a satisfying life course and the means to survive outside conventional expectations. The focus of these celebratory events is on educating participants about the potential of fungi to provide the world with tools to feed, repair and heal the earth. Organizers draw on talent within the community to introduce novices to mycology. Invited "expert" instructors are not always well-versed in the subject. What matters to the founders is that they have spawned many communities of zealots who have been encouraged to pass on information about how fungi cooperate with other organisms. Their purpose is to promote mushroom cultivation on a local level, instruct farmers and gardeners of the benefits of soil fungi to soil biodiversity over fertilizers, inspire entrepreneurs to experiment with ways to control and eliminate waste, to remediate soils, to purify contaminated water, air, and oceans using fungi, and to manufacture fungal medicines. Certainly, these are all worthy goals and activities.

These and other mushroom educational events have been organized by amateur mycologists, ecologists, cultivators, and educators devoted to promoting appreciation of the neglected world of fungi. Bierend points out that many of the folks drawn to pursuing an independent career involving fungi often feel marginalized for being "different." Many are creating businesses based on cultivation of popular edibles, nutraceuticals and a plethora of fungal preparations used medicinally. The mycorrhizal lifestyle of fungi in particular has provided a generation of solution-oriented idealists and entrepreneurs with a powerful metaphor for fostering spiritual, social, economic, and environmental change. They have chosen an independent anti-capitalist path to survival that respects fungi and their own struggles to gain the respect of a society despite not having university doctoral degrees in mycology. They are generally for the democratization of mycology and medicine and applying current knowledge of the kingdom's representatives to educate and address their concerns about waste, hunger, air and water pollution, climate change incurred by oil spills and practices of big agricultural farming that destroy the diversity of formerly bioactive soils.

So why don't these younger generations care to join any of the established mycological organizations? Some at least have issues with our ways of conducting forays. Most of the original members of mycology clubs still around are now aging gray-haired retirees - "stuck" in our conventional and outdated preference for searching for unusual specimens, identifying them, and eating edibles. Some in the new generation are not particularly fascinated by learning scientific nomenclature or how to identify fungi that are not edible or have no known medicinal use. They object to our collecting thousands of fungi for table identification, and then throwing out duplicates and the entire lot after they've been duly recorded. Critics have a legitimate point here. More and more we are subjecting unusual finds to DNA analysis, and hopefully more clubs will consider tossing left-over fungi collections back into the forest or into compost heaps rather than into giant plastic garbage bags destined for the dump. Certainly, we do not need everyone to collect every fungus seen during a multi-day foray, given that so many of the same species are collected day after day by tens of us.

Some consider members of established mycological organizations "old." Presumably gray-haired middle-age and older folks lack understanding or empathy with their optimism about succeeding in their worthy multi-faceted
endevors. Personally, I feel that most folks interested in mycology – even older ones like myself – are also "different," come from many varied backgrounds, and are unconventional. Most of us are rather liberal, support social diversity and care about humanity's often deleterious effects on our planet and its inhabitants. We are as curious, thoughtful and entranced about our connections to fungi as those in the youth myco-movement. Our love and appreciation of the fungal kingdom is what draws us all together.

I have even introduced a couple of local young enthusiasts to mycology who have gone on to establish mushroom cultivation businesses to serve the communities in the Pioneer Valley of Western MA. Thanks to them, our supermarkets now offer a wide variety of fresh locally cultivated edible fungi for sale. It is difficult work, requiring a reliably dedicated staff who will show up to maintain and grow a fledgling mushroom business. I have also taught mycology classes to wonderful well-meaning students in their twenties and thirties who have jumped on the medicinal mushroom bandwagon. I am personally not an advocate of promoting fungal medicinals for preventing or curing diseases until evidence-based testing can demonstrate they are effective beyond their unquestionable nutritional value. However, I continue to urge people of any age to explore all legitimate scientific avenues to eventually prove me misguided and "old fashioned." In areas of the world lacking any reliable medical resources, edible mushrooms grown on waste materials, and fungal tinctures and pills may at least provide a healthy food source and give hope to the sick.

Over the past few years, several excellent tomes have been published on the broad subject of mycology, and about the quirky people who are passionately engaged and even employed in a growing list of mushroom-related activities designed to "save the world." Eugenia Bone, Langdon Cook and Michael Pollen, for example, have artfully explored and elucidated the underground connections of fungi and other organisms below and above the soil. They have also investigated the ideas, ideals, and dreams of its most ardent proponents from scientific, historical, social and philosophical perspectives. Free-lance nature journalist Doug Bierend brings us up to date on the social makeup, activities and philosophies that drive an expanding cadre of mainly younger devotees to act as ambassadors of mycology and its democratization. For those who may be interested in gaining insight into amateur mycology in all of its current manifestations – from cultivation to fermentation – I highly recommend this well-written book. It is thoroughly researched and presents the reader with a sympathetic, yet reflective view of contemporary popular mycology.

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**Interview with Long Litt Woon, Author of The Way Through the Woods: On Mushrooms and Mourning**

*The Way Through the Woods* is the story of how Long Litt Woon, consumed with grief following the unexpected death of her husband, found relief in a new-found passion: hunting for mushrooms. Cecily Franklin, president of the Western Pennsylvania Mycological Club, recorded this interview with the author last summer as part of the club’s annual Gary Lincoff Foray (held virtually this past season). Thank you to Cecily Franklin, Long Witt Woon and the WPMC for making this interesting interview available to all. Funding for this presentation was made possible by a grant from Norwegian Literature Abroad (NORLA). Click on the image to the right to access it.
Panellus, Scytinotus, and the Taxonomy Rabbit Hole

By Jessica Benson Evans

When considering winter branch-dwellers, the usual suspects pop up again and again. There’s Plicaturopsis crispa with its “wiggly” spore-bearing surface, the various golden Stereums, and the commonly spotted white Irpex lacteus. These finds still delight me, but they offer little mystery for me to ponder. I do love a good mystery … and so I was doubly delighted by a mystery that presented itself on a fallen branch this past October. When I search for fungi in the colder months, I often pick up large numbers of fallen branches and roll over many logs in hopes of finding something interesting. On this occasion, I was searching for fungi along the trail that runs parallel to the stream in our back woods. It’s a location I return to often, given both ease of access and frequency of nice finds. The non-descript stick I picked up was fairly short, perhaps two feet long, and no thicker than my wrist. Co-existing on opposite ends of the branch were two different species: one familiar, and one not. Who were they? I broke the stick to take the side by side comparison photographs (Figs 1, 2).

Brown with a tiny or absent stem and a partial veil covering the gills of very young specimens. This is a species I encounter frequently in the winter, so I was able to identify it by sight and experience. Its friend nearby, however, was something different. The fruiting bodies were a similar size and general shape as the Tectella, but were reddish-pink and lacked a partial veil (Fig. 4).

There are few keys readily available to help with these little gilled wood-dwellers, but there is one I like to use for reference that’s accessible online from the South Vancouver Island Mycological Society, a Pacific Northwest club. Although fungi can certainly vary from region to region,

this key provides a great framework for further, region-based study. Using this key, I was able to quickly narrow down my search to the genus Panellus, then to Panellus ringens, also known as the “winter oysterling.” At this point, a new lightbulb went off in my head. Had I seen this before?
Several years ago, I encountered something similar in a nearby town. How could I have forgotten this distinctive saprobe? Blame it on a brain full of the facets of my other life beyond fungi! A quick review of my files revealed I’d spotted *Panellus ringens* in November of 2017, and at that time followed up my find with microscopy. You can see my photographs relating to that observation [here](#).

As I returned to my previous observation of *Panellus ringens*, I noticed that the name in Mushroom Observer had been changed to *Scytinotus ringens*. While all of the usual sources list the current name as *Panellus ringens*, this change in Mushroom Observer suggests some taxonomical hijinks may be afoot. Down the rabbit hole I went.

Mycologist Rob Hallock, on his popular Facebook page “Mycological Word of the Day,” notes that “*Scytinotus* is a little known genus of the Porotheleaceae. Literally, the genus name means ‘Leather Ear.’ *Scytinotus ringens* is the type species.” Leather ear? Mine didn’t look particularly ear-like. And, honestly, taxonomy is not my strong suit. I still use many older names for fungi and don’t often know the new names until long after they’ve been changed. Usually, genera change when DNA sequencing results reveal that fungi are more closely related to a different genus than originally believed. Some names that have stayed pretty much the same since the 1800’s have changed as the result of DNA sequencing!

In this case, sequencing done in 2017 revealed that *Scytinotus ringens* was not closely related to *Panellus* at all, even though visually it is very similar. Instead, it is more closely related to cyphelloid fungi like *Henningsomyces candidus* (Fig. 5.) Cyphelloid fungi are fungi that have disc, tube, or cup-shaped fruiting bodies. In contrast, *Tectella* is in the Mycenaceae family and is more closely related to Mycena, Panellus, and Xeromphalina.

Folks who live in the Pacific Northwest frequently encounter *Scytinotus longingue* (Fig. 6), which appears very similar to my find in shape and habit but is pale peach to ivory in color and only found on red alder. We don’t see red alder (*Alnus rubra*) in New England, the reason none of us is familiar with *Scytinotus longingue*! That particular species also went by *Panellus* for a long time, but *Scytinotus* is by no means a new genus. The name *Scytinotus* was actually first used in 1879. Naming conventions follow a “first used” rule; this means that when a new name is needed, taxonomists go back to the oldest used name whenever possible. Can’t use *Panellus* anymore? Go back to the oldest available name, which in this case was *Scytinotus*.

Of course, when I reached out to rising taxonomist Jacob Kalichman, who is well known on Mushroom Observer and other online platforms, he noted that I shouldn’t get too attached to this new name, either. He described the various genera of Porotheleaceae as being tenuously backed up by DNA evidence. More sequencing in this family may lead to other name changes.

To get a better sense of just how complicated taxonomy is, you can see Kalichman’s and coworkers’ comprehensive listing of all of Agaricales, published in 2020, [here](#). Their phylogenetic tree, or a branching diagram of the genetic links between fungi, shows all of the complicated relationships that have to be considered when fungi are sequenced (Fig. 7, next page). The more sequencing mycolologists complete, the better we understand these relationships.

All of these changes can make it difficult to learn and remember the names for the fungi we already know. Thankfully, we have the internet as a useful tool. A quick search for the name we know will often lead us to the new name we don’t know. And, in my case, each name change provides an opportunity for deeper learning. Here’s to more mysteries with interesting solutions!

**Author’s Note:** I did not complete microscopy on my new specimen, as my office is currently set up for fabric mask production and sewing. A sign of the times, for sure!

(See next page)
Key descriptions from http://www.svims.ca/council/Pleuro.htm

6a Cap purple to purple drab with lilac tinges.................................................Panellus ringens (also known as Panus ringens)
CAP (0.5) 1.0-3.0 cm in diameter; pucker ed fan shape; light purple to purple drab or lilac with vinaceous tints, fading in age; dried material vinaceous gray to lilac gray at point of attachment; sometimes irregularly striate, margin even to somewhat crenate (scalloped); with pallid pubescence dense over lateral attachment of cap; flesh thin. GILLS radiating from point of attachment, fairly well spaced; fawn to pink, fading in age to reddish brown when dried. STEM absent. HABIT and HABITAT birch sticks and limbs on ground; usually several to gregarious; sometimes nearly imbricate; fruiting in late summer and fall; sometimes collected in winter. EDIBILITY unknown. SPORE PRINT white. MICROSTRUCTURES spores (4.0) 5.0-7.0 x 1.2-2.0 um, oblong to sausage-shaped, amyloid. REMARKS "ringens" means "wide open", from Latin.

7b Partial veil covers gills when young, leaving hanging remnants on margin, taste mild, stem usually absent..............................Tectella patellaris
CAP 0.7-2.0cm across, circular, with concave to flattened gill-bearing surface facing downward, attached at its edge or upper surface, margin inrolled; ocher to dingy brown; slimy to viscid when young, becoming dry and fibrous to floccose-scaly, margin decorated with hanging pieces of veil tissue; flesh tough, ocher. ODOR and TASTE not distinctive. GILLS close to distant, narrow; pale brownish; pale buff partial veil covering gills when young. STEM usually absent, if present then very small. HABIT and HABITAT in groups or clusters on logs and fallen branches of hardwoods, various times of year, uncommon. EDIBILITY unknown. SPORE PRINT white. MICROSTRUCTURES spores 3-5 x 1-1.5 microns, cylindric or curved cylindric, smooth, weakly amyloid. REMARKS The partial veil in a stemless agaric is very unusual.
Living in Laurel Park: An Interesting History and a Nice Place to Find Boletes!

By Peter Russell

Living in Brooklyn my forays usually started before dawn, not to get to the mushrooms before anyone else, but to brave the Brooklyn Queens Expressway before anyone else and to escape NYC. My foraging time was limited by the need to return early to claim an on-street parking spot. I visited the same sites many times, but I can’t say I had the time to get intimately familiar with any of them. Life changed this past year when I moved into a little cottage at Laurel Park in Northampton and I found I could forage whilst taking the garbage out or going to the mailbox. Though this was my first season in the Pioneer Valley, and I don’t know if was a typical one (finding hedgehog mushroom and blewits in December?), I have really begun to appreciate this wonderful spot (and not just for the absence of crazy New York drivers). I wanted to share some of the finds of my daily garbage disposal foray, restricting myself to a few of the boletes.

But first a few words about Laurel Park. Created in 1872, it was one of many Methodist camp meeting grounds created in the 1800s. It was built in woodland originally as a summer tented community but the tents were soon replaced by cottages built within the original tent site’s footprint, most being 20 by 40 feet (I have to mention my little cabin has been extended slightly in the last 100 years!). Activities weren’t restricted to prayer meetings – physical activity and enjoying nature were also key. Today Laurel Park is a collection of around 100 quirky privately owned campground cottages in communal land around common buildings.

Laurel Park was also one of the Chautauqua Assembly sites. Up to 6000 to 8000 people would visit for the day to hear soaring oratory, innovative chalk talks, homespun theatrics, string quartets and other forms of entertainment. Old newspapers report bootleggers, gypsies and horse traders milling around the entrance with constables keeping the peace with drawn swords. Today it has a very different relaxed feel; I can foray in peace whilst Silent Sitting is going on in the outdoor Tabernacle!

An old postcard of one of the little avenues with its campground cottages.

The same view today: the trees are fewer, but they are bigger.
One of the great attractions to me are the trees. Originally the tents would have been in a more wooded setting but many trees were lost in the hurricane of 1938 and more were thinned in 1950. But what remain are now well protected. As residents we aren’t allowed to trim or cut down any tree without written permission, we can only thin shrubs under 4” diameter, and we can’t touch the laurel bushes. If a tree is a hazard to property it might be removed but a hazard does not include the natural shedding of small branches (the rules don’t say how small). Another great attraction is I haven’t yet found a rule forbidding foraging for mushrooms.

My usual foray is a small wooded area around the Tabernacle. It’s a small area about 100 yards across and contains about 200 trees consisting mainly of white pine and hemlock with the occasional white or red oak. I guess the management practice hasn’t changed much since the park opened in 1872; the ground flora is mown and the leaf fall cleared in autumn. The result is a short grass sward rich in mosses. Last July after the rains this area was covered in boletes, Amanitas, Russulas, and other large mushrooms. One of the most abundant was the two-toned bolete, *Baoranga bicolor*. The typical specimen has a red cap and stalk, bright yellow pores that stain blue, a shallow tube layer, and yellow flesh that is unchanging slowly turns blue; however there is a lot of variation! They typically lack a reticulum but there were some at Laurel Park that have a prominent reticulum at the top of the stipe.

Another abundant bolete was *Xanthoconium purpureum*. I had only previously seen older fruiting bodies where the cap color had faded making them difficult to tell apart from the brown capped *Xanthoconium affine*; but these fresh mushrooms had a maroon colored cap with a brownish yellow stipe. But that didn’t stop me confusing it with *Boletus separans* which has a paler cap and stalk with lilac tones. It wasn’t until I found a fresh flush of the latter that

![Baoranga bicolor, the two-toned bolete, abundant in Laurel Park last July.](image)

![Baoranga bicolor, atypical version with reticulation at top of stipe.](image)

![Xanthoconium purpureum, growing in abundance last July.](image)

![Fresh Boletus separans and Xanthoconium purpureum, showing the difference in color and the staining of the cap with ammonium hydroxide.](image)

the differences were obvious. *X. purpureum* stained greenish blue on the cap with a drop of ammonium hydroxide compared to the aquamarine color of *B. separans*.

I wonder why this little patch of trees is so productive compared to other sites I visited at the time. I know fruiting depends a lot on the right weather conditions but one reason for the abundance may be that in a landscape where forests are predominantly young secondary growth, many of the trees at Laurel Park are large mature specimens. You tend to get different fungi associated with mature rather than younger trees as there is a succession of mycorrhizal partners as the tree matures from early stage fungi (low sugar requirements, small & ephemeral sporocarps, easily germinated spores) to late stage fungi (high sugar requirements, large and persistent sporocarps,
difficult to germinate spores). For example, many *Russula* and *Amanita* are considered to be late stage fungi. Or maybe it’s just they are much easier to spot growing in the short grass!

I am not a confident user of mushrooms keys and struggle with even the most basic concepts. A good example is with that prized edible, *Boletus edulis*, or the penny bun as it’s called from where I come from. I can quickly get to the right part of the key but there are several different varieties and color forms that I struggle to distinguish from other closely related species. The key features are obvious: is it is a large bolete with pores that start white but turn yellow then brownish yellow with age, a white reticulum on the stalk, and mild tasting flesh that does not change color. A stroll of my favorite foray spot in late October is a good example.

First I found a clump of large boletes at the back of my neighbor’s cottage. They were under white pine and hemlock though there were some Norway spruce across the road. These mature specimens seemed to have the typical features of a cep, including the white reticulum over a white stipe though that had become indistinct with age. I thought these were *Boletus edulis* but my partner threw me by asking why it wasn’t *Boletus huronensis*. The latter is a large bolete associated with hemlock that is infrequently found in our area. It has a warm yellow brown to cinnamon-brown cap, pale yellow flesh that stains slightly blue, a reticulum only at the very top of the stipe, pores that remain yellow throughout its lifespan and turns slowly blue when bruised. This is one bolete that should be avoided as it has caused several cases of severe gastrointestinal distress in the last few years. I have only seen *B. huronensis* once at a COMA foray in Connecticut and remember it being surprisingly dense and heavy. Bill Yule kindly let me reproduce his picture of *B. huronensis* in this article.

Having convinced myself that the specimens I found were *B. edulis* and not *B. huronensis*, I immediately came across another clump of boletes under a nearby group of hemlock and white pine. These too had the characteristics of *B. edulis*. Unlike the first clump they were fresh specimens and the pores showed the progression of white to yellow with age. My initial reaction was they must be a separate species from the first. Their red rusty caps and white reticulum on what looked like a brownish-white background looked so different. They reminded me of the *B. pinophilus* I used to see in England, but that is a European species and the equivalent in New England seems to be *B. pseudopinophilus*. Although I couldn’t see any darkening of the reticulum when rubbed, which is a distinctive feature of the latter species, I convinced myself that was the likely name.

No more than a few yards further under yet more hemlock and whitepine I found another freshbolete with a lemon-yellow cap and a white reticulum over a pale brownish stipe. This seemed to fit the description and habitat of another *B. edulis* look-alike: *Boletus chippewaensis*.

I was impressed to find all three less than a hundred yards in the same grove of trees, so it did worry me that they were just variations of the same species! I hope they
come up next year so I can investigate further.

As an aside, in the same grove of trees, I had earlier found another B. edulis look-alike. This was growing at the base of an oak tree. The wrinkled cap and the heavy white reticulum seems to be indicative of Boletus variipes.

A last big flush of boletes from the Suillus genus came in late October. These boletes often have slimy caps, often rings on the stem, and have glandular dots on the stem (though sometimes this is not obvious). Another feature is the boletinoid pores which radiate and elongate out from the stipe to the edge of the pileus.

Many species of Suillus are associated with individual hosts, as is the case with one of the most abundant at Laurel Park, Suillus americanus, which is restricted to eastern white pine. It is commonly called the chicken fat mushroom, probably because of the yellow color and slippery texture of the cap. Other distinguishing features include the red flushes on the cap, and a margin hung with cottony tissue. I have read differing accounts of the edibility of this species from delicious to not worth the effort. Some people do develop a rash from handling the cap (as well as sticky fingers!)

Another common Suillus looks just like the Suillus granulatus I used to see in Old England. We used to call it the weeping bolete because of the milky droplets exuded by the pores, but another name is the granulated slippery jack. It gets this name because the apex of the stem is granular, the granules being formed as the milky droplets dry on the stem. Suillus weaverae is held to be the North American equivalent of S. granulatus and differs not only phylogenetically but also the host it is associated with. S. weaverae is associated with five-needled pine and S. granulatus with two-needled pine. Given that I have only seen the five-needled white pine at Laurel Park, I guess they are all S. weaverae.

There are other boletes I have recorded at Laurel Park in addition to the few described here, but there is not space here to describe them all. I am puzzled that I have not found any bitter boletes or birch boletes yet, but I will be keeping an eye open for them next year. Laurel Park and the nearby Fitzgerald Pond are great foray sites; it would be great to foray there with other PVMA members!