



Spore Print

2005 No. 2 Quarterly Newsletter of the Edmonton Mycological Society

The Oyster Mushroom

Pleurotus ostreatus
(Jacq.: Fr.) Kummer
Tricholomataceae, Basidiomycota,
Fungi

It is difficult, if not impossible, to go for a walk anywhere and not see any fungi. One very common and widespread fungus in Alberta is the oyster mushroom, *Pleurotus ostreatus*.

Oyster mushrooms are edible and a favourite among mushroom collectors. The taste of the oyster mushroom varies from very mild to very strong, sometimes sweet with a hint of anise (licorice). It varies in texture from very soft to very chewy, depending on the strain and what time of the year you pick it. The oyster mushroom has one of the longer life spans of the fleshy mushrooms and can grow for a period of up to three weeks. However, you will find that the larger, older specimens get to be fairly tough, while the younger pickings are both tender and delicious.

As with any wild mushroom, it is important to eat a small



Pleurotus ostreatus is easy to spot and excellent as a side or part of a main dish. This year has produced some beautiful, large specimens.

amount the first time and check if your body reacts adversely to the species; some people are allergic to oyster mushrooms. Like many other fungi, oyster mushrooms serve as food and habitat for many animals, including fungus gnats, horned fungus beetles, springtails, some turtles, white-tailed deer, and squirrels. A brief soak in

water can rid you of the smaller diners.

The common name comes from the white, shell-like appearance of the fruiting bodies, not from the taste. It is characterized by a white spore print, attached to decurrent white or yellowish gills, often with an off

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President's Message



Markus Thormann, president of the Edmonton Mycological Society

The second foray of 2005 has come and gone. Our annual spring foray took us to the Jack Pine Grazing Reserve near Wabamun Lake northwest of Edmonton. As anticipated, there was a great turnout and both true and false morels were found along with various other basidiomycetes. Sadly, I was unable to participate in that foray, because I was away on business and vacation in Germany at that time. While there, I saw very few mushrooms on my numerous hikes through the central German mixed wood forests. I did come across small patches of little brown mushrooms (or "LBMs"), which are notoriously difficult to identify with any degree of certainty, and some bracket fungi (*Fomes* and *Fomitopsis* spp.), but not much else, despite ample moisture in the soil and from above (it rained almost every day). The reasons for this mycological sparseness at that time of year remain a mystery to me.

The executive is currently working on the details for the first "Alberta Foray", to be held in the foothills towards the end of the summer (page 6). This is a new event for the Edmonton Mycological Society and will greatly increase our visibility in the province. In addition, our annual "City of Champignons" at the Devonian Botanic Garden is fast approaching August 07 (page 9).

The annual Canadian Botanical Association conference was held at the University of Alberta from June 15-18. Aside from chairing a session of research presentations, I presented some of my research data as well. I am currently examining basidiomycete diversity and their roles in peatlands. My projects have implications from climate change and biodiversity perspectives. While my work is highly technical and deals mostly with molds, its underlying principles are similar to the goals of the Edmonton Mycological Society. Rather than just collecting different fungi on forays, it is worthwhile to think about the roles of those fungi as well. Do they decompose organic matter? Are they mycorrhizal with trees and shrubs? Are they pathogenic? These different roles are crucial to maintain ecosystem health (yes, pathogens are important too); however, the diversity of fungi (and their roles) we see today will likely be altered to some degree during our lifetime in response to a changing climate. We may see some previously common species become rare or disappear altogether, while others may expand their current known ranges and miraculously appear in our favourite foray spots. Hence, our efforts to document fungal diversity today becomes that much more important in the future.

With that in mind, cheers and happy 'shrooming, Markus

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The oyster

(continued from page 1)

centre stem, or no stem at all. The semi-circular caps can be up to 20 cm wide and often occur in clusters.

In Alberta, oyster mushrooms grow abundantly from early June to August on dead and decaying aspen (*Populus* spp.), and sometime birch (*Betula* spp.), logs and stumps, which they decompose to obtain nutrients. Sometimes they are also found growing on living trees. In these cases, *P. ostreatus* is parasitic, rather than saprobic, in nature.

Oyster mushrooms are cultivated in both Japan and The Netherlands, with over 20,000 tonnes per year sold worldwide by the early 1990s. Commercial cultivation has to take into consideration that the spores, especially in the dense settings of cultivation, are highly allergenic and can cause severe reactions.

If you find an 'oyster log' that is portable, the mushroom does lend itself to cultivation. Take the log home, put it in a warm and

moist environment, and enjoy the harvest. The same log can yield harvests for many years.

Since these mushrooms can look different at different times of the year, it is easy to confuse them with other mushrooms, even poisonous ones. One of them is *Lentinellus ursinus*. It also has white spores, but it has serrate (saw-toothed) gill edges. If you look at the basidiospores under the microscope, they are small and amyloid (blue) in Melzer's reagent (the active ingredient of which is iodine). In addition, the gills have many amyloid-staining hyphae in them. Other common mushrooms that can be confused with *Pleurotus* are *Crepidotus* spp.

They also lack a stem; however, they can easily be distinguished based on spore colour. Spores of *Crepidotus* spp. are brown, rather than white as in *Pleurotus* spp.

Neither of these two look-alikes is deadly poisonous; however, they should not be eaten.

So, next time you go for a walk, keep your eyes open for oyster mushrooms; however, keep in mind to be absolutely certain



This tree stump covered in oyster mushrooms was found near St. Paul on June 7, 2003. Photo: Bill MacLowick

that what you have collected really are oyster mushrooms.

Remember, if in doubt, throw it out! 🍄

- Markus N. Thormann

You can also check out some recipes on page 7 & 8.



The young oyster mushrooms clusters are more tender and usually have a nicer flavour. They also tend to have less insects. Photo: Loretta Puckrin



The lack of a stipe or stalk and the presence of gills with a white spore print are indicators of an oyster mushroom. Photo: Loretta Puckrin

Morel Foray at Jackpine Grazing Reserve



The "Morel Family" of Mushrooms: *Gyromitra esculenta*, *Gyromitra gigas*, *Verp bohemica*, *Verpa conica*, *Morchella elata*. Photo: Loretta Puckrin.

The hotel parking lot at Gainford was full of cars and excited Mushroomers. We had rain and we had sun. The Morel season was upon us!!!! The convoy began behind our fearless leader - Martin - and we arrived safely at the Jackpine Grazing Reserve. After some educational points about where to find these elusive but very tasty mushrooms, everyone scattered to try their luck.

As the cartoon suggests, the *Morchella elata* eluded the majority of the foray group, although I understand that some members were

very successful. The Verpas were not as shy and many soon found their way into our baskets and pails.

Morel Foray Fungi List

Collybia sp
Fomes fomentarius
Gyromitra esculenta
Gyromitra gigas
Morchella elata
Psathyrella madeodisca
Verpa bohemica
Verpa conica
Xeromphalina campanella

The Mushroom Hunt ended with a pooling of various mushrooms that had been found and an identification session (see the list above showing the various mushrooms that were located). An introduction to the various morels, especially the *Gyromitras* (a.k.a. false morels), was of particular interest to many of us.

All in all, a successful foray. 🍄

- Geraldine Kolacz



Ready! Set! Go! After a short session on where to look for the morels, the group scattered in all direction, eager to find and pick mushrooms. Photo: Gerlinde & Claus Cegielyny.



Oyster Foray and Pig Roast



The non-polypore table was filled with expected, unusual and tasty varieties. The oyster mushrooms are on the top centre and the boletes are bottom left. Photo: Loretta Puckrin

***It Rained. We were soaked.
Temperatures Fell.
We were cold.
Oysters hid. We found other
mushrooms.***

No matter what was thrown our way, as a group we found ways to enjoy ourselves. It wasn't hard.

As an educational outing the oyster foray was a great success. As a form of entertainment it was definitely something that bears repeating.

Over thirty people braved the inclement weather to go hunting oyster mushrooms. Some of us had already found substantial growths this year and were very positive about filling our baskets and freezers. We forgot to tell the oyster mushroom what their role was in this event.

We did have a surprise when members of the bolete family showed up. What was thought to be a "Red Cap" *Leccinum borealis* was in fact a close cousin. Now I know how to tell the difference.

To say that the day was not a success because we didn't harvest a lot of mushrooms would be misleading.

The more I attend the EMS forays, the more I understand that a club organized foray is not only about finding mushrooms - it is about learning to identify what you find and seeing what the mushroom looks like 'in the wild'. No matter how many books you read, or even how many mushrooms you see in some one else's basket, the only way to really appreciate the environment

of a specific mushroom is to see it grow. The filling of your basket is a bonus when it happens.

We explored several different habitats within Pieter van der Schoot's woodlot, one of which yielded *Suillus granulatus*, and two species of *Leccinum* (*L. insigne* and *L. snellii*, see sidebar for full list of species).

Later, as a group, we explored a portion of the Poplar Creek Natural Area (NE 17 Twp 48 Rge 5 W5M). It was here that we were lucky enough to actually find some oyster mushrooms.

Once we had done our duty to the mushrooms, we relaxed to a

wonderful meal. In addition to the samples of mushroom dishes brought by the members, we had a wild mushroom soup, coleslaw and a freshly roasted pig to round out the meal. The evening closed with draws for door prizes. After supper, we adjourned to the BBQ area for the identification and recording of the species found. Thankfully we have members who can identify the mushrooms at a decent pace or we would still be there.

See you at the next foray! 🍄

- Loretta Puckrin

Poplar Creek June 18 Foray

Fungi List

Agaricus silvaticus
Anellaria semiovata
Baeospora myriadophylla
Clavaria pyxidata
Coprinus atramentarius
Coprinus sp.
Crepidotus mollis
Exidia glandulosa
Fomes fomentarius
Fomitopsis pinicola
Galerina cf. *venenata*
Ganoderma applanatum
Gloeophyllum saepiarium
Gyromitra esculenta
Gyromitra gigas
Heliocybe sulcata
Helvella lacunosa
Hypholoma fasciculare
Hypomyces sp.
Leccinum insigne
Leccinum snellii
Lentius sp.
Lenzites betulina
Marasmius oreades
Marasmius pallidocephalus
Melanoleuca cognata
Mycena haematopus
Mycena pura
Myxomphalia maura
Peziza repanda
Phellius ignarius
Phellinus pini
Phellinus tremulae
Piptoporus betulinus
Pleurotus ostreatus
Plicaturopsis crispa
Pluteus cervinus
Pluteus patricius
Polyporus badius
Polyporus brumalis
Ramaria abietina
Russula fragilis
Russula sp.
Schizophyllum commune
Stereum hirsutum
Suillus granulatus
Trametes ochracea
Tremella mesenterica
Trichaptum bifforme
Tricholoma saponaceum
Tricholomopsis rutilans



Bill Richards worked with Martin Osis to identify and classify all the mushrooms found on the June 18th foray. This identification process is an important part of the work done by our association. Photo: John Thompson.

The First Alberta Foray

Over the last few years I have jealously read about the different annual forays other mycological clubs have been holding across Canada and the States. We are finally doing something similar. This type of event, where everybody gets together, provides tremendous learning opportunities as well as being a whole lot of fun. As our club grows and gets more members from across all of Alberta, having a foray of this scope reaches out to everyone and brings Alberta mycological interests together.

With that in mind, we will hold our 1st "Alberta" Foray coming up on the September long weekend. The location will be at the Crimson Lake Hall just west of Rocky Mountain House. We have scouted out the area and the habitat looks fantastic. Forays are planned both inside and outside the provincial park. The hall gives us a nice meeting place with full kitchen facilities. There is lots of room for motor homes, trailers, and campers, but there are no hook ups. We also have a baseball field where tents can be set up. Anyone looking for other accommodations would have to travel to Rocky Mountain House, which is about ten minutes away. There are also several "Bed and Breakfasts" in the area.

To keep our costs to a minimum, we need to rely on volunteers both in the kitchen and at our ID tables. The best way to learn is to jump in with both feet and participate. The cost for the weekend including all events, camping, and food will be \$75.00 per person (\$25.00 per day). No charge for children.

Registration is open until our Mushroom Exposition on August 7, but please register as soon as possible. 🍄

- Martin Osis

Friday Night, September 2nd:

- Registration, set up and mixer: 6:00 to 10:00

Saturday, September 3rd:

- Breakfast - 8:00 to 9:00
- Registration - 9:00 to Noon
- Foray - 9:30 to 11:30
- Introduction & foray outline - 11:30 to 12:00
- Lunch - 12:00 to 1:00
- Foray - Foraging 1:00 to 4:00
- ID tables - 4:00 to 5:30
- Mushroom tasting - 5:30 to 6:30
- Dinner - 6:30 to 7:30
- 8:00 to 10:00 p.m.
 - Canning and preservation

Sunday, September 4th:

- Breakfast - 8:00 to 9:00
- Foray - Walking ID class: 9:30 to 11:30
 - Crimson Lake Provincial Park
- Lunch - 12:00 to 1:00
- Foray - Foraging - 1:00 to 3:00
- Keying and ID workshop - 3:00 to 5:30
- Mushroom tasting - 5:30 to 6:30
 - 100 year Alberta Birthday Banquet Bash - 6:30 to 8:00
 - 8:00 to 10:00 p.m.
 - "Preparation of medicinal mushrooms"

Monday, September 5th:

- Foray - 7:00 - 9:00
- Breakfast - 9:00 - 10:00
- ID morning foray finds and question and answer session. - 10:00 to 11:30
 - Wrap up - 11:30 - 12:00
 - Pot luck Lunch
 - Clean-up, Pack-up and head home.



Ashland Dam Foray and Campout - July 9/10

Just a reminder to folks about the Ashland Dam Campout. This foray is intended for all our newer members to introduce them to basic mushroom identification and the use of keys. This will be a continuation and the field portion of our last regular meeting. Of course all of our members are welcome to participate.

Starting out is always the most difficult time and we want to introduce people to the some of the basic Alberta edible mushrooms. Using keys is one of the most important skills to develop and we will have an afternoon workshop in doing that. We would like our members to refrain from

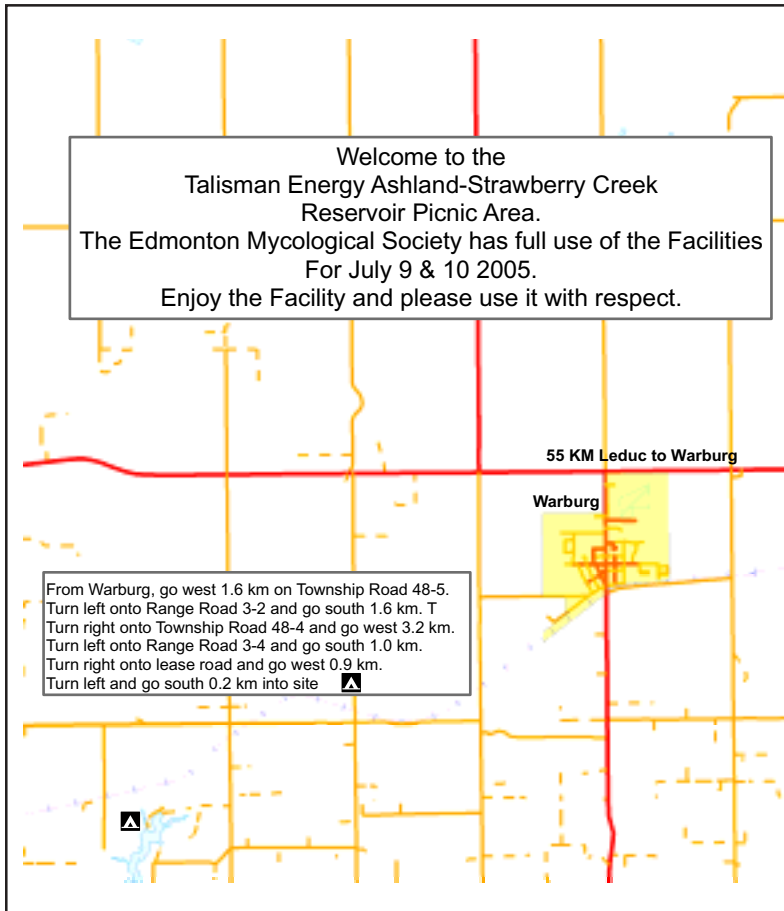
picking large amounts of mushrooms on Saturday until after the workshop, as we will be doing more serious foraging on Saturday evening and Sunday.

There are some barbeques on site (which we will fire up) so bring

your favourite grilling item. We also usually make a big pot of communal mushroom soup and welcome any other potluck dish.

There are signs for the Ashland Dam on Hwy. 39 a few miles past the town of Warburg. The turn-off on the gravel road for the campsite will be marked. If you miss it and reach the sign for the Ashland Dam you have gone about 1 mile too far south.

- Martin Osis



Sherwood Park Natural Area Foray

June 8 Foray Fungi List

Agrocybe dura
Bjerkandera adusta
Clavicornia pyxidata
Collybia butyracea
Collybia dryophila
Collybia sp. 1
Collybia sp. 2
Fomes fomentarius
Fomitopsis pinicola
Hypholoma capnoides
Hypoxylon mammatum
Lycoperdon pyriforme
Mycena haematopus
Peziza repanda
Phellinus tremulae
Polyporus badius
Polyporus varius
Psathyrella hydrophila
Tricaptum bifforme

Stuffed Salmon

This recipe works well with a full salmon and used as a stuffing or you can sandwich the stuffing between filets or even fold over a salmon side to create a pocket. If not using a whole fish (*you don't have to use salmon*) make sure you use some method of holding the pieces together (*string or skewers*). Either pre-cook your favourite rice (*a mixture of wild and whole grain rice works very well*) or use instant rice.

4 cups of cooked rice
 2 cups of oyster mushrooms - chopped or sliced into thin sections
 1 medium onion (*red with salmon, white with whitefish is suggested but even leeks can be used*) - chopped or thinly sliced
 1 cup chopped celery
 4 cloves of garlic - chopped
 Salt, Pepper to taste

Mix all ingredients. Stuff into salmon. Cover in foil wrap and bake until all the fish is cooked.

For a more unique taste cook the rice in white wine, chicken broth, or even milk.

You can also sew the fish closed and grill on a BBQ but in that case you might want to pre-cook the entire stuffing first.



EMS Goes Public



Photo: Louis Galick.

Once a year, we have the opportunity to share our love of mushrooms with a wide variety of people. It is the “City of Champignons” Exposition at the Devonian Gardens, which is being held on August 7th this year.

The day before (August 6th), members either get together (the group site is Poplar Creek this year – contact Pieter Van Der Schoot if you are planning on joining the group) and pick as many different types of mushrooms as are willing to be found. If you can’t make it to the Poplar Creek area, simply go to the areas where you know there are mushrooms and pick samples there.

The idea is to carefully pick the entire stalk rather than cutting the mushrooms the way you would do for foraging. Complete mushrooms (full caps and stipes) and mushrooms of the same species but different ages (from button to fully expanded caps) help complete the displays. To keep the mushrooms as fresh as possible, pack them in moss to preserve the moisture level. It is truly amazing how many different varieties of mushrooms grow in our geographic area and can be picked in one day.

A few samples from the natural area (a small pine branch, a

grass cluster, deciduous leaves, etc) will add visual impact, so please bring some along.

When you take the mushrooms to the Devonian Gardens, they are categorized based on their growing area and displayed on large tables (see photograph).

EMS will have the display tables, Spore Prints, books and mushroom soup available for guests and members alike. Martin and Bill lead short forays into the Devonian Garden grounds to show the proliferation of mushrooms even in that semi-cultivated environment.

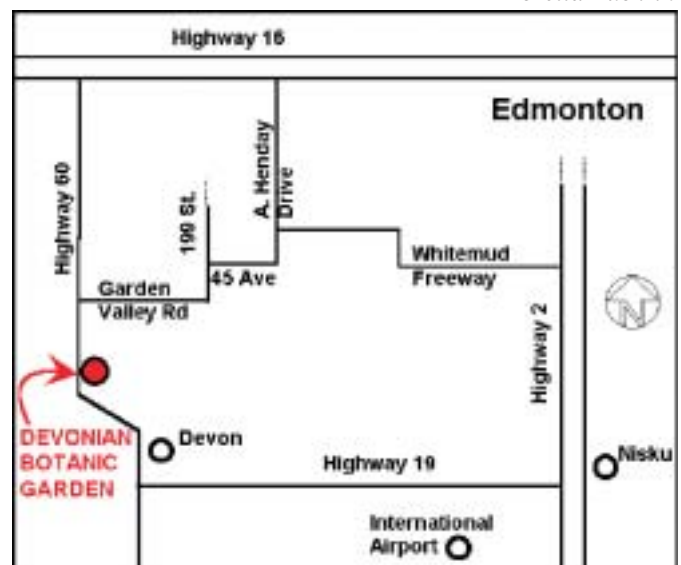
Please contact either Martin Osis or Pieter Van der Schoot if you can assist in the event. We need assistance in setting up the tables, categorizing the mushrooms, serving the soup, assisting Alan with memberships, and talking to the visitors about mushrooms. The event starts at 10:00 am with the opening of the gates to the public, so please arrive an hour earlier to help set up.

With enough volunteers, everyone will have a chance to sample the mushroom recipes, check out the foray findings, and learn a little bit more about some varieties of mushrooms. It is a fun, educational, and interesting event that helps to promote our association. 🍄

- Loretta Puckrin



The Pine Pavillion (above) and a map to find the Devonian Botanical Gardens (right).



EMS Calendar of Events for 2005

Please Join Us!!

All forays are undertaken at your own risk. You are responsible for transportation and accommodation.

July

9/10

A weekend (Sat-Sun) foray. New Member Field Orientation, KEY workshop

Mushroom: The King Bolete
Location: Ashland Dam site, Camp out

13

Mid-Summer Wednesday Evening Foray

Mushroom: Various
Location: Mill Creek

Ravine (meet at the swimming pool parking lot)

27

MEETING - Obscure Edible Mushrooms of Alberta - Mike Schulz

August

6

Saturday Foray collecting for Mushroom Exposition 2005

Mushroom: All groups from all habitats
Location: Your choice

7

City of Champignons Exposition at Devonian Gardens, Sunday. Member volunteers are needed!

17

Late-Summer Wednesday Evening Foray

Mushrooms: Various

Location: Edmonton River Valley (Mill Creek or Whitemud Creek)

24

MEETING - Preparing your favourite mushrooms.
Location: TBA

27/28

Weekend Foray to the Foothills Area

Mushroom: Gypsy, Man-on-Horseback, Hedgehogs
Location: Robb



September

3-5

Long Weekend Foray - First Annual Alberta Wide Foray

Mushroom: *Leccinum, Russula, Lactarius* and other agarics

10/11

Weekend Foray to the Foothills - Campout

Mushroom: Hedgehog and Honey Mushrooms

Location: Foothills - TBA

28

MEETING - Photography Contest Finalists

October

26

MEETING - AGM

November

TBA

President's Dinner:

22

Mushrooms in our world - by Markus N. Thormann

Location: Riverbend Public Library, 7:00-8:45 pm



General Member Meetings

Fourth Wednesday of every month.

Time: 7:00 pm

Location: Riverbend Library



Framing and Cropping

You can't always shoot a great photo. The camera selects an area for its focus that isn't what you intended, you can't get close enough or you don't have the time to frame things properly if you want to stay with the group and not get lost. There are a variety of reasons that the photos you bring home from a foray are not what you wanted.

Don't despair. In today's technological world there are the electronic tools for changing the original photo into something you would want to keep.

In the first example (1A) we have a photo that doesn't have a

clear identity and is over-exposed (white where there should be colour) in some areas. Overall the photo is very poor. Rather than simply deleting the file you have a chance to salvage a portion. By taking the lower right side of the picture we have

created a totally different photo. It now has a focus - the round globular mass of fungi. The focus is not centered in the image but rather placed in the top left corner. Remember that people in Canada read from left to right and top to bottom. By placing the main image in the top left corner the eye will start with our focus point and then move to examine the less important parts of the photograph.

In the second example (2A) the main image was too small. The green foliage, rather than adding depth and interest, is simply taking away from the main image. To eliminate these problems the photo was cropped in tightly deleting the extra twigs and leaves. With the good contrast between the mushroom and the dead leaves on the forest floor, we now have a more dynamic photo. With three mushrooms and the different sizes there is creative imbalance that makes the photo more appealing. Having only one mushroom and centering it rarely creates the best photograph.

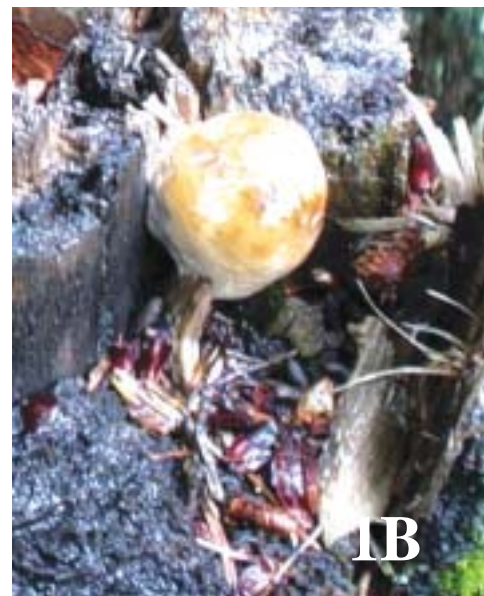
Having the young of the species in the shot is good for

identification. If the photographer had stopped and picked one of the mushrooms and laid it on its side (or upside down) to see the gill structure and stipe, that would have been even better as far as identification goes but might have reduced the visual impact.

Remember to submit your favourite photos to the EMS photo contest by emailing them to:

photocontest@wildmushrooms.ws along with your name, a description of where you captured the fungi and identity (if you know, but not essential).

- Loretta Puckrin



Mushroom Environments

Be Able to Describe an Environment

Knowing how to describe an environment not only allows you to identify your species of fungi but will also help you identify other areas where that species might be found. This is important to the long-term mushroom picker as the same site is rarely good year after year. Remember the reason mushrooms grow - they are helping to break down the waste products of the forest (dead leaves, downed trees etc.). As the breakdown occurs, the substrate on which the fungus grows is used up. For this reason every site has a built-in time limit. Some people recommend that you have as many as 10 spots for each edible variety you wish to pick. It might be good to start with identifying some mushroom-bearing locations and keep visiting them until you know what grows in which part of that forest area. By tracking your findings (a log book or mushroom diary is indispensable) you will develop reliable sites. You can't count on having someone else share their sites!

Oyster Mushroom Locations

Since we are featuring the oyster mushroom (*Pleurotus ostreatus*) in this issue, we should look at the environment that fosters the growth of this fungus.

One book lists the habitat at "deciduous trees, especially willow and aspen, rarely on pine and hemlock", but in this area it is most commonly found **what is commonly called** black poplar trees (**Balsam poplar**). Remember - that is "most commonly found" - not "always" or "only". One especially delicious clump was found on a Mountain Ash tree in the city. The other important point to note is that *Pleurotus ostreatus* grows on

the wood of dead or dying trees. They are not found in the grass or in pine forests so the areas in which you look can eliminate all non-deciduous or grassy regions.

The trees don't have to be on the ground - they can be stumps or trees which only have a few leaves on the crown. *Pleurotus ostreatus* tends to grow on trees which still have their bark and have been downed the previous year.

Many people enjoy looking for oyster mushrooms as they can be spotted from the car. The bright, near white mushroom against the dark of the tree trunk almost shouts out "stop the car". As the mushroom grows in clusters rather than individually, it makes them easier to spot. Make sure you are not trespassing in your quest for these delicious fungi.

The Balsam Poplar

The balsam poplar leaves have a smoother profile than the other poplars (see photograph) and they are shaped more like the spade image on playing cards. The poplar is half-way between the Balsam poplar and the

The balsam poplar bark is similar to the maple tree bark with dark, deeply furrowed bark.



aspens. As you can see by the proper name, the aspen is a member of the same family. It is no wonder that some areas have *Pleurotus ostreatus* mostly on the aspen trees, while in this area we find them on Balsam poplar - they are part of the same family of trees. 🍄

-Loretta Puckrin



Watch out for oyster look alikes, such as the polypores above. Check for gills, spore colour and smell.



Knowing the species of trees will help you identify potential mushroom sites.

