



A PUBLICATION OF THE NORTH AMERICAN MYCOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION

The Mycophile Quarterly

APRIL MAY JUNE 2026

NAMA YOOP



Rockstar Roster

NAMA YOOP
FEATURED
PRESENTERS



2026

Marquette, Michigan

Similkameen Valley
Foray & Feast

End-of-Life
Transition Tool

Chopped-style
Challenge Winner



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Toadstool Picker's Review 4
NAMA President Trent Blizzard

NAMA News

**Congratulations to NAMA Yoop
Logo Contest Selectee 6**
By Contest Winner Alex Merryman

**Meet NAMA Yoop Chief Mycologist
Tavis Lynch 7**
Q&A with Bruch Reed, COO/MQ Ed.

**Burn Morels and Cold Sweats: Dispatch
from Similkameen Valley Foray & Feast 12**
Judith Noël Gagnon, NAMA Business Member

**Rockstar Roster: NAMA Yoop
Featured Presenters 17**
By Ken Buegeleisen and Amanda Tricomi

NAMA Affiliated Club Spotlight

Meet Vermont Mycological Society!..... 26
By Jess Evans, President, Pioneer Valley Mycological Association

New Hampshire Mycological Society 30
By Sandra Patton, Club Relations Committee

Mycophilia

**U.S. National Fungus Collection (BPI)
Needs Your Help! 37**
By Oliver Filialuna and Dr. Andrew Wilson

**COMA Educational Outreach Program
Featured in Local Newspaper 40**
By Lisa Solomon, Connecticut-Westchester Mycological Association

***Daughters of the Forest: A Conversation
with Film Director Otilia Portillo Padua 42***
By Maya Han, New York Mycological Society

**Psilocybin-Containing Mushrooms
as an End-of-Life Transition Tool 52**
By Avery Stempel, Medicinal Mushrooms Committee

NAMA Eats

**Announcing the Winning Entry of
NAMA's 2026 *Chopped*-style Challenge 62**
By Jonathan Applefield, Culinary Arts Committee

NAMA Reads

**Book Endorsement by Alisha Millican,
NAMA At-large Trustee
Animal Mycophiles, by Eva Gordon 69**
By Alisha Millican

**From Slugs to Psychedelics: An Interview
with *Animal Mycophiles* Author Eva Gordon 70**
By Jason de la Peña

There Were Women in the Woods 75
By Alisha Millican

NAMA Crossword

April May June Crossword..... 78
Bruch Reed, NAMA COO/MQ Ed., with Layout Artist Chris Ross

January February March Crossword Answers... 79



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NAMA Yoop Logo
Alex Merryman, Colorado
Mycological Society



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Please contact Mycophile@namycology.org with your article proposals and ideas. We'll get you published!

Submissions
Submissions must be received in editable-document format (do not send pdfs), with photos attached separately (not embedded) and photo credits provided.



NAMA

Toadstool Picker's Review

Why You Should
Become the Next
NAMA President

The president of NAMA serves a three-year term and is limited to two terms. I'm now 4½ years into my six years, and one of my biggest responsibilities over the next year is helping find our next president.

As I've asked for advice on setting the next president up for success, a few common questions keep coming up.

How much time does it take?

In the beginning, I spent as much as 20 hours a week learning the ropes and getting things organized. Today, that's a very different story. We now have an amazing team of dedicated volunteers along with six stipended positions:

Web Administrator, Membership Manager, Communications Director,





Mycophile Quarterly Editor, *McIlvainea* Editor and Foray Chair. We also increased our COO's role and support. The result is a team that gets the work done—not just the president. These days I spend only a few hours a week on NAMA business and I can confidently say the job is not overwhelming.

What tools do you use?

We've upgraded our Association Management System (AMS), cleaned up our membership database, improved member communications, launched a new website and set up Google Workspace accounts for committee chairs and board members. Those systems make it much easier to stay organized and keep NAMA running smoothly.

What kind of expertise is necessary?

You don't have to be a mushroom expert to be an effective NAMA president. I'm surrounded by people who know far more than I do about Kingdom Fungi. It still amuses me when people assume I'm the expert. (To be fair, I am an expert in a few mycothings... just not as many as people think!) That said, my knowledge has grown tremendously simply by being involved with NAMA. Apparently, fungal-knowledge osmosis is a real thing.

Of course, there are many reasons to get involved with NAMA. In the end, what I'll remember most isn't the meetings, the reports or the projects—it's the people. Serving as NAMA's president has introduced me to incredible friends from across the continent and our circle has grown in ways I never expected. That's the real gift of this experience and it's something I hope every member gets to enjoy, whether you serve in a leadership role or simply show up and get involved. 🍄

Trent Blizzard

Trent Blizzard
President



NAMA News

Learn about all the
Happenings in and
around NAMA.



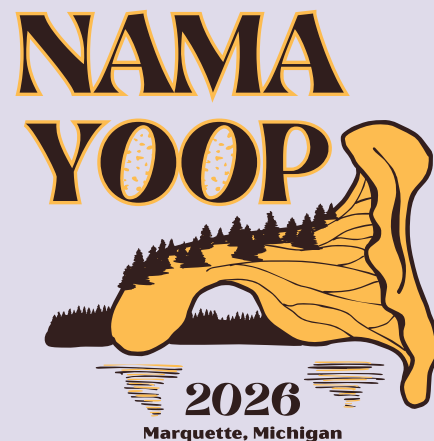
NAMA Yoop
Logo Contest
winner Alex
Merryman.

Congratulations to NAMA Yoop Logo Contest Selectee

ENTRY AND PHOTOS PROVIDED BY CONTEST WINNER ALEX MERRYMAN, COLORADO MYCOLOGICAL SOCIETY

All elements of the design are meant to pay homage to the beautiful Upper Peninsula of Michigan. Central to the design is a chanterelle. A prized edible, the Upper Peninsula is home to several species of chanterelle, which should be in season during the foray.

The shape of the chanterelle is meant to evoke the famous Lover's Leap Arch at Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore and, more generally, the spectacular arches, sea stacks and rock formations that make up the lakeshore of Lake Superior. Atop the chanterelle and in the distance beyond the arch, conifer trees are depicted in abundance to evoke the North American boreal forest and the rich fungal diversity therein.



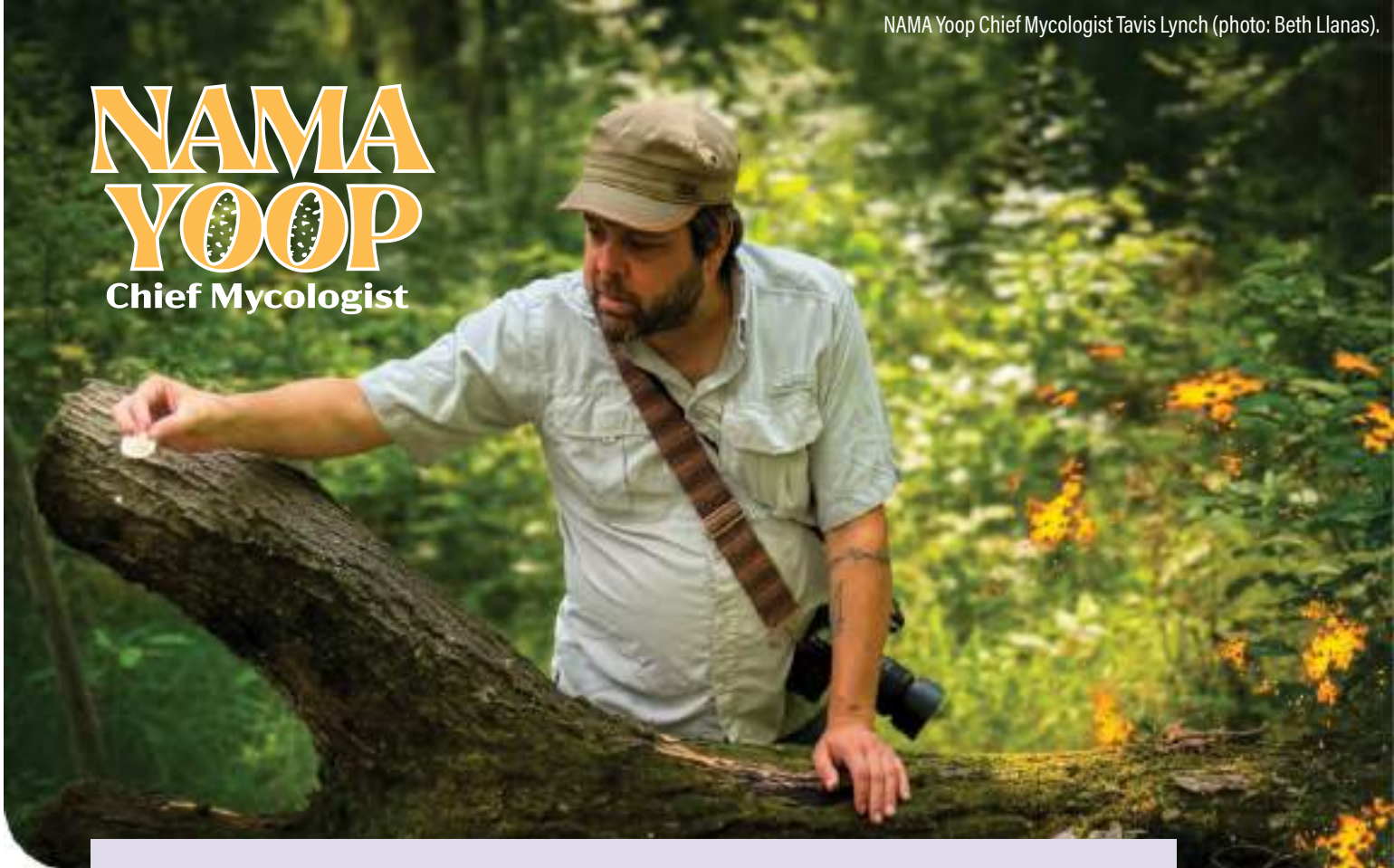
The winning design.



Finally, within the center of the two letter Os of “Yoop” lies Yooperlite, an iconic stone that hails from the Upper Peninsula. Thanks to the presence of sodalite, Yooperlites famously fluoresce under UV light, much like many mushrooms. 

NAMA YOOP

Chief Mycologist



Meet NAMA Yoop Chief Mycologist Tavis Lynch

Q&A WITH BRUCH REED, COO/MD ED.

When did you become interested in fungi?

"I became fascinated with fungi as a young child because of mushroom hunting with my dad, David Lynch (not the *Twin Peaks* guy, for the record). He taught me how to pick morels and "pinkies" (meadow mushrooms), which are probably *Agaricus andrewii* in this area. He called them pinkies because the young gills were pink. Morels and pinkies were the only mushrooms my family really collected for the table. When I was a bit older, I remember asking my dad about a white mushroom growing in the pines near our home. He said, "You need a mushroom book." That is where it started. I got the 1958 book by Alexander H. Smith, *The Mushroom Hunter's Field Guide*. I was hooked. I wanted to know all the mushrooms; everything about mycology. References were tough to find in the 1980s. Another book I picked up young was the original *Audubon Guide to North American Mushrooms*, by the late great Gary Lincoff, which I acquired in high school. I was especially struck by Gary's inventive and often silly common names. The books piled up over the years and I still add to my collection each year."



Tavis Lynch (photo: Emilymae King).

What do you consider to be your fungal education?

“My fungal educator has been the forest. I obtained a degree in welding in 1996 and went to work in the steel industry for about 22 years. I did not enjoy school. I did not enjoy factory work. I needed more time with the trees. Trees are good people! My favorites are the large bur oaks and white oaks in my front yard. Last year, I had a brief conversation with Stephen Russell at NAMA New England. I asked him, after he figured out all the mushrooms, if it would ruin his sense of wonder in the future. He responded that it would make him better in the woods. It’s an answer that I can appreciate and it helped me to understand better what his goals were. They are not dissimilar to mine. Of course, I do enjoy being the person that people go to for mushroom identification—but I love not knowing just as much! It helps to keep me

sharp and I do learn many new species each year. In the UP and surrounding areas of Wisconsin, I have photographed about 1,200 species of macrofungi. I expect this number is less than half of what is left for me to find.”

Who are your fungal mentors?

“My father gets the title of mentor before anyone but I did learn a lot from others throughout the years. Dr. Patrick Leacock and Dr. Britt A. Bunyard were huge in the development of my knowledge over the past 15 years or so. I can learn something from everyone. Brad Knowles, Brennon Strnad and Jeremy Holmstadt (all from the WMS), have taught many things over the years. Their studies are independent of mine and we can all share information at our events each year. I have spent a fair amount of time in the classroom and in the woods with Jon Sommer. He has helped me with taxonomy and mushrooms



Tavis and Dave Lynch
(photo: Barbara Lynch).

outside my bubble of the Northwoods. Even Bruch Reed has shown me things, like the spotted coralroot orchid (*Corallorhiza maculata*), a parasite on certain species of *Russula* (my area of study and the most important genus in the world)."

**THAT MOMENT CHANGED
MY PERSPECTIVE ON THE
MYCOLOGICAL WORLD.**

**THIS ASTUTE, PASSIONATELY
DEDICATED SCIENTIST IS
FASCINATED BY MUSHROOMS
FOR THEMSELVES, NOT FOR
THEIR TASTE OR OTHER ASPECTS
OF PERCEIVED USEFULNESS.**

**THAT STRUCK ME AS AN
INSPIRING DEDICATION
TO HIS PROFESSION."**

perspective on the mycological world. This astute, passionately dedicated scientist is fascinated by mushrooms for themselves, not for their taste or other aspects of perceived usefulness. That struck me as an inspiring dedication to his profession."

Do you have a favorite mycologist from history?

"Alexander H. Smith, without question. First of all, he's from Wisconsin; I am a bit biased there. I cannot name an American mycologist who had a better understanding of fungi, especially in the Great Lakes states. He was a hero to me. I never got a chance to meet him, as he died when I was quite young."

Who is your favorite living mycologist?

"Dr. Patrick Leacock. Patrick taught me so much. I love his humility. The first time I ever met him, we went out to dinner after a foray. We had a pork porterhouse and a shiitake mushroom risotto. It was excellent. I noticed Patrick picking the mushrooms out of the risotto one by one. When I asked him why he was doing that, he replied, "I don't like mushrooms." That moment changed my

What do you find most enticing about the Upper Peninsula?

"There are very few people there. When I go to the woods in the UP, I am the only one there. There are only 36 species of trees there; it is not particularly floradiverse. It has the advantage of being untouched and underexplored. There is beautiful scenery with waterfalls and cliffs. There are mountains: the Porcupine Mountains, aka "the Porkies," one of the oldest mountain ranges in North America. You can walk for miles in the UP and not cross a single road. I know everyone felt "so far north" last year at NAMA New England in Vermont; well, here, we are over 250 miles north of Vermont!"



Are there specific fungi you hope to encounter during NAMA Yoop?

“My current fascination is with the puzzle presented by the *Russula brevipes* group, which is in the subgenus *Brevipedum*, section Lactarioideae. I believe it is a cluster of at least seven species. My major goal is to obtain what we now call *Russula brevipes* from as many foray sites as we can, to DNA-sequence them from every possible habitat and, simultaneously, attempt to use these specimens to discern fine morphological differences that would enable us to distinguish them from one another in the field. I love mysteries and I don't want my mysteries all to be solved through molecular studies—which, of course, are vitally important—but I want to be able to identify mushrooms by their morphological features as much as possible. I hope NAMA Yoop attendees get to appreciate the relative sizes of mushrooms in our region, which tends to increase the further north you go. [Bruch] once idly hypothesized that this size increase might be related to shorter fruiting season up north, that perhaps mushrooms need to be larger to produce more spores in a shorter season. Intriguing idea.”

Are there specific issues you see as challenging to mycology in the region?

“Vastness. The UP is essentially one huge wilderness with comparatively few small communities. Unscathed, save for a few copper mines that have long been closed. Many of the towns used to be quite large. Now some of the towns that were built to hold 15,000 people only have about 1,500 living there. There are many of these across the peninsula. The area definitely needs more mycological study but size and lack of population make that challenging.”

What mycological goals do you wish to accomplish during NAMA Yoop?

“Dovetailing with my interest in sorting out the *Russula brevipes* group, I hope we can broaden that goal to other cryptic species that may be hiding within named species, of unknown lineage. I'm curious to see if the mushrooms of the UP match more closely to Wisconsin or are unique to Michigan. Can these lineages cross the Mackinac Bridge? I think a reasonable species-list goal is 500, based on the fact that we are going to have knowledgeable Ascomycota people. That's a group with which I struggle.”

Where do you see yourself, mycologically, in the next decade?

"I honestly hope to be exactly where I am today. I hope I'm asking the same questions of the same people and I hope I'm still plucking out wood ticks and swatting mosquitos while taking photos of amazing mushrooms, barely able to stand up from my leg cramps after lying in a mudpuddle to get the photo. I'm very happy with what I'm doing."

What brought you to NAMA specifically?

"I joined NAMA in 2017 in order to attend that year's Annual Foray in Cable, Wisconsin. Years earlier, I had read a brilliant article in NAMA's *Mycophile* newsletter that anthropomorphized mushrooms from the perspective of a woman scorned. It was written by a female author. I wish I could find it again. It's a brilliant and hilarious piece of satire but also informative and educational. It really spoke to me. If any reader of this interview can find that again for me, I'd be most grateful."

Do you have a favorite mushroom?

"This is a tricky question; there are different mushrooms for different categories such as edibility, usefulness, appearance... Overall, I have to pick *Leucocoprinus (Leucoagaricus) rubrotinctus*. It think that is simply the most beautiful mushroom I have ever seen. I love the free gills, the ornate cap, the white partial veil with its beautiful bronzy-red edge that you don't see in any other mushroom. Its overall delicacy is just heartbreakingly beautiful." 🍄



Leucocoprinus (Leucoagaricus) rubrotinctus (photo: Tavis Lynch).



[Photo 1](#) The author surveys prime burn-morel hunting grounds.

Burn Morels and Cold Sweats: Dispatch from Similkameen Valley Foray & Feast

JUDITH NOËL GAGNON, NAMA BUSINESS MEMBER: MYCOBOUTIQUE INC. OF MONTRÉAL, QUÉBEC

photos by author or MQ Ed., as noted.

Campfire Stories

True treasures of the forest floor, morels are among the most highly prized wild mushrooms for gastronomes. They are harvested in abundance west of

the Rockies in conifer forests that have been ravaged by fire. In the late spring following a wildfire, foragers flock from all over seeking their fortunes. While the increasing availability of cultivated morels slightly dispels this mirage of quick wealth, it does nothing to diminish the thrill of the adventure and the culinary pleasure of wild burn morels.



Home base: welcoming, clean and comfy Manning Park Lodge.



NAMA Treasurer Melodie Gates delights in Sous Chef Jennifer Levine's amazing cakes (photo: MQEd.).

Nice haul of burns.

The Morel Rendezvous

This year, the North American Mycological Association (NAMA), in conjunction with its affiliated local club [Vancouver Mycological Society \(VMS\)](#) and with help from [South Vancouver Island Mycological Society \(SVIMS\)](#), organized a gathering in British Columbia to share this excitement. From June 1 to 4, at the Manning Park Resort in the Similkameen Valley—near a major recent wildfire—volunteers warmly welcomed 132 enthusiastic participants. Joined by Myriam, a particularly forward-thinking friend, I was among them.

Epicurean Basecamp

Several activities were on the agenda for this gathering, satisfying backcountry adventurers of all levels with hikes and entertaining homebodies with cooking workshops. In the evenings, the schedule made way for featured presentations led by renowned specialists. This was an opportunity, among others, for Chief Mycologist Paul Kroeger and *Mushrooms of British Columbia* (The Royal British Columbia Museum, 2021) authors Dr. Andy MacKinnon and Dr. Kem Luther to paint a captivating portrait of the province's mycological species.

The trip was punctuated by true gastronomic feats. On the first two nights, Chef Julie Schreiber's culinary team dazzled us. She first served barbecued crab-stuffed shrimp and morels followed by a braised bison-cheek lasagna. The next day, she followed up with rabbit rillettes, a maitake pâté (recipe), a black trumpet jam and salmon en papillote, closing it all out with a true work of art: Sous Chef Jennifer Levine's cakes shaped like burnt tree trunks, with fondant morels and cup fungi nestled at their bases.

On the final evening, Chef Paul Moran (winner of *Top Chef Canada Season Seven*) took over. On the menu: sourdough bread with seaweed and wild ramp butter,



Morchella quarry rises from the ashes.



Scene of a difficult but successful rescue.

followed by wild tuna salad, then a remarkably delicate chicken with vin jaune (“yellow wine”) and morels. For dessert, his memorable tiramisu highlighted powdered *Lactarius rubidus*, the Western candy cap, which is more tart than our Quebec *Lactarius helvus*.

Around the table, conversations were lively among mycologists from all corners of the continent. Discussions bounced enthusiastically among foraging forecasts, customs, hockey, mushroom prices and geopolitics.

A Taste of Ashes

In preparation for the foraging excursions, I had downloaded the incredibly useful Gaia app as well as maps of the sector, in order to track our route and visualize the location, forest type and age of the fires.

On the first day, as part of a group of seven hikers, I headed toward a nearby burn. We had all the essentials with us: lunch, whistle, drinking water, walkie-talkies, GPS, compass, spare batteries for all our electronic devices, a first-aid kit, bear spray, bear bells, baskets and mushroom knives.

On steep, rugged slopes at the base of towering, completely charred trees, what macroscopically appeared to be *Morchella sextelata*—brown with cream-colored stems—formed clusters, alongside likely candidates for *Morchella tomentosa*, black and slightly velvety with their characteristic double wall. In the complex world of post-fire morels, however, we knew that only DNA sequencing could truly validate these identities.

Our septet harvested a modest ten kilograms; growth seemed to have been delayed by the cold temperatures of the preceding weeks. Burn morels are fickle:



Head Chef Julie Schreiber, thrilled with her NAMA apron (photo: MQEd.).

Syilx Okanagan leader Eliza Terbasket, who provided a stirring Indigenous welcome to kick off the event, with VMS President Aril Yeo (photo: MQEd.).

they require a soil temperature of 18°C (64F), a significant winter snowpack, cool frost-free nights, warm days not exceeding 30°C (86F) and regular rain.

Back on Burnt Ground: Three Whistles for Help

The following day, alongside official NAMA guides, I joined about twenty hikers on Crown land, heading toward pine and spruce plantations that had burned the previous year. In some areas where the wood had already been salvaged, the ground, damaged by logging companies, restricted mushroom growth to the forest edges. Furthermore, commercial pickers from Quebec had already been spotted there, making the quest for resources even more competitive.

Everyone wore an orange vest, carried a whistle and had to be paired with a partner. Communication was straightforward: one whistle blast to gather, three blasts in case of distress.

The trees, planted in rows years earlier, were still standing, which made walking easier. I now knew that morels concentrate under trees still covered in needles. And this was confirmed: they were everywhere—except on dry soils along the mountainside—even where the competition had beaten us to it.

In the afternoon, a thunderstorm began to roll in and as we headed back to the vehicles, one attendee's absence was noticed. With her radio batteries dead, locating her was difficult. She and her small group were finally contacted at the bottom of a ravine: she had tripped over a rock and fractured her knee, rendering her unable to stand or walk. In an isolated environment with absolutely no cell service, the volunteers' solidarity instantly kicked into gear. While initial first aid was provided to stabilize her leg and keep her warm, a satellite emergency signal was sent to contact 911 and after a five-hour wait in the light rain, the BC Ground



Search and Rescue Team arrived with a stretcher for her safe evacuation to the nearest hospital.

A Thrilling and Rewarding Adventure!

On June 4, we hit the road back. Thanks to Myriam's foresight in packing a dehydrator in her suitcase, I returned to Montreal with 500 grams (about 1 pound) of perfectly dried morels, a bit of ash on my shoes, valuable safety lessons, fabulous encounters and a truly "mycomarvelous" tale to tell. 🍄



Rockstar Roster: NAMA Yoop Featured Presenters

KEN BUEGELEISEN, FORAY COMMITTEE CHAIR AND AMANDA TRICOMI, MARKETING COMMITTEE

photos provided by presenters



Chief Mycologist Tavis Lynch

Tavis is an amateur mycologist from northern Wisconsin, where he has been studying fungi for over 40 years. Tavis is the author of *Mushroom Cultivation* (Quarto, 2018); *The Beginner's Guide to Mushrooms* (Quarto, 2020); and *Grow Your Own Mushrooms* (New Shoe Press, 2024). He is currently working on a two-volume book, *The Mushrooms of Wisconsin*. He teaches mycology classes in about 35 schools around the Upper Midwest and focuses most on the genus *Russula*. Tavis currently serves as vice president of the NAMA-affiliated [Wisconsin Mycological Society \(WMS\)](#) and is proprietor of [Tavis's Mushrooms](#) in Cumberland, WI.

EVENING KEYNOTE PRESENTERS



Anne Pringle, PhD

Dr. Anne Pringle earned her PhD in Botany from Duke University and is the Vilas Distinguished Achievement Professor of Botany at University of Wisconsin, Madison. She is known for her work examining ecology and evolution using fungi as model organisms and was elected a fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science in 2025. Dr. Pringle's early research examined diversity in arbuscular mycorrhizae, structures created by fungi that live in close association with plants. She has examined the distribution of fungi, including human pathogenic fungi, ectomycorrhizal fungi and lichens that grow on tombstones. She also participates in science events to promote knowledge about fungi and shares her knowledge with children's newspapers and presents to the public on whiskey fungus, a byproduct of alcohol distilling.



Amy Honan, PhD

Dr. Amy Honan teaches mycology for Oregon State University and is the cofounder of the Crested Butte Botanic Garden. She holds a PhD from the University of Washington, where she studied the ecology and evolution of the stalked puffball *Tulostoma*. She investigated the evolution of the saprotrophic genus *Tetrapyrgos* for her master's degree from San Francisco State University and, as an undergraduate, studied the root pathogen *Armillaria*. As a mycologist, Dr.

Honan focuses on fungal biodiversity, evolution and ecology and is passionate about fostering community engagement in documenting fungal biodiversity for conservation efforts.



Britt A. Bunyard, PhD

Dr. Britt A. Bunyard is the founder, Publisher and Editor-in-Chief of the mycology journal *FUNGI Magazine*, in print since 2008. He is a former university professor and has published over 100 academic and popular science papers. He has served as an editor for mycological and entomological research journals and mushroom guidebooks. He serves as coDirector of the [Telluride Mushroom Festival](#). In 2021, Britt received NAMA's [Gary](#)

[Lincoff Award for Contributions to Amateur Mycology](#). Dr. Bunyard has authored several books, including *The Lives of Fungi* (2022, Princeton University Press), which is sold all over the world and translated into Italian, German, Spanish and Chinese languages. Additional titles include *Fungi of the World: A Guide to All Phyla* (2026, Princeton University Press); *Atlas of Fungi* (2026, Princeton University Press); *Fungi Decoded* (2025, Clarkson Potter); *The Little Book of Fungi* (2024, Princeton University Press); *The Beginner's Guide to Mushrooms* (with coauthor Tavis Lynch) (2021, Quarry Books); *Amanitas of North America* (2020, The Fungi Press); and *Mushrooms and Macrofungi of Ohio and Midwestern States* (2012, The Ohio State University Press). Coming in 2027 from Quarry Books: *Fungi: A Practical Field Guide*.

FEATURED PRESENTERS



Alfred Drummond-Herdman

Alfred Drummond-Herdman is based in Edinburgh, Scotland and has spent the last few years studying dung fungi. He has won a wide following for his macro time-lapse photography, revealing this hidden world to a wider audience. He is currently working on various taxonomic projects concerning the Bolbitiaceae and Psathyrellaceae, including the description of new species and the revision of a genus.



Sigrid Jakob

Sigrid Jakob is a New York City–based amateur mycologist with a specialization in dung fungi and Inocybaceae and is a former president of the NAMA-affiliated [New York Mycological Society \(NYMS\)](#). Her work combines field observation, microscopy and DNA sequencing, with a focus on documenting overlooked fungal diversity in urban and natural habitats. She is particularly interested in taxonomy and making specialist knowledge accessible to a broader community.



Beth Llanas

Beth Llanas is a cosmetologist by day and an aspiring naturalist by night. Her drive to engage more professionally in the natural world came from a sudden and intense fascination with insects, specifically ants, around 2018. In the years focusing on myrmecology, she stumbled onto her niche: fungus-growing ants. This newfound passion exposed an appeal for fungi as a whole. Beth is a certified Wisconsin Master Naturalist. She has also attained a Wisconsin Wild Mushroom Certification through the NAMA-affiliated [Wisconsin Mycological Society \(WMS\)](#) a Bugs 101 certification through the University of Alberta online and two pest-control certifications through the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, with focus on

biological control agents. She runs her social media accounts under “[Bugs with Beth](#),” where she shares facts on the insects of Wisconsin, and currently serves as a WMS board member.



Todd Osmundson, PhD

Todd Osmundson, PhD, is a University of Wisconsin La Crosse Professor of Biology. As a fungal biologist, he is interested in fungi in nature—especially mushrooms—and medically relevant fungi. Using genetic data, genomics, transcriptomics and DNA barcoding, he studies the biology of these organisms with fieldwork in Australia, China, Costa

Rica, French Polynesia, Guatemala, Mexico, Svalbard, Thailand, Canada and the United States, in tropical, temperate, arctic and alpine biomes. Some of the areas of current research in his lab include understanding the invasion history of the cultivated golden oyster mushroom (*Pleurotus citrinopileatus*), species discovery and phylogenetics in the bolete genus *Tylopilus*, understanding the biology of post-fire morel mushrooms (*Morchella*), characterizing Driftless Area fungal biodiversity as well as studies of alpine fungi.



Danielle Stevenson, PhD

Danielle Stevenson, PhD, is an environmental scientist and applied mycologist with a cross-disciplinary practice focused on addressing complex environmental challenges at the intersection of waste and pollution. Grounded in both scientific rigor and practical application, Dr. Stevenson brings vision, technical expertise and a collaborative

approach to developing effective, systems-based solutions.



Aishwarya Veerabahu

Aishwarya Veerabahu is a 4th-year Botany PhD candidate studying fungal ecology at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, advised by Dr. Anne Pringle, with a PhD minor in Life Science Communication, advised by Dr. Dominique

Brossard. She is broadly interested in studying fungal biodiversity, drivers of diversity, cross-kingdom interactions, science communication and science policy concerning fungi (or the lack thereof). When she's not doing science, she's jamming out with her band, [Big Slide!](#)



Gordon Walker, PhD

Gordon Walker, PhD, is originally from Cambridge, MA but also spent time growing up on the Northshore of Massachusetts. He attended UC Santa Cruz, obtaining a BS in Biochemistry. He then attended UC Davis, where he completed his PhD in Biochemistry and Molecular Biology. He then worked for Opus One winery, isolating wild yeasts and pioneering new wine technologies. He spent time working in biotechnology around the San Francisco Bay Area, then returned to UC Davis where he completed postdoctoral work on fermentation process control. Dr. Walker is the author of *Dr. Fun Guy's Passport to Kingdom Fungi: A Scientist's Guide to the Wild and Wonderful World of Mushrooms, Molds and More* (Ten Speed Press, 2025). Besides his passion for all things fungi and fermentation, he is an avid chef, forager, sailor, SCUBA diver and gardener.



Liz Weinstein

Liz Weinstein is a Chicago-based photographer and community mycologist interested in the unique mycobiota of the Upper Midwest. She serves as President of the NAMA-affiliated [Illinois Mycological Association \(IMA\)](#) and is an active member of the NAMA-affiliated [Wisconsin Mycological Society \(WMS\)](#). She is also a photographer on the NAMA Visual Arts Committee and volunteers with the fungarium at the Field Museum of Chicago. Since her time as a 2023 Artist-in-Residence at Isle Royale National Park, she has been conducting an ongoing scientific survey and photo documentary project for the National Park Service, "The Fungal Diversity of Isle Royale," which includes DNA verification and specimen housing at the Field Museum. Liz is also wilderness

first-aid certified and provides mycology-based public speaking engagements and workshops. You can find her fungi photography and field observations on iNaturalist and Instagram at [@mushroomPhotography](#).

WORKSHOP PRESENTERS



Alan Rockefeller

Alan Rockefeller is a mycologist specializing in DNA barcoding, field photography and fungal microscopy. He has been studying fungal diversity for more than two decades and, since 2001, has photographed more than 2,500 species. In order to discover new taxa and spark interest in the hearts and minds of those new to the field, he regularly leads forays all over North America.

Alan's contributions to community science have been prolific and he has taught thousands of people how to extract and amplify the DNA of their mushroom finds. As of today, he has uploaded more than 700 of his own fungal DNA sequences to Genbank and is a coauthor on several scientific papers, including publications documenting new species of bioluminescent *Mycena* and *Psilocybe*. Alan is also devoted to the art of macroscopic mushroom identification and spends hours each day identifying mushrooms for the general public; he has identified over 325,000 fungi on websites like iNaturalist, Mushroom Observer and in various Facebook groups.



Harte Singer

Harte Singer is the Sequencing Program Director for the [Fungal Diversity Survey \(FUNDIS\)](#) and a founding member of the DNAMA DNA-Sequencing Committee. His passion for fungi started during his previous career as a chef in New York City, where he developed a taste for wild edible mushrooms. The desire to spend more time outdoors led him to move to Northern California

and transition out of the restaurant business. Inspired by the curious nature of fungi, he began an academic journey that has led him to pursue a master's degree

under Dr. Brian Perry at Cal State East Bay, studying fungal endophytes. His work with NAMA has involved generating DNA barcodes for thousands of specimens at foray events and teaching folks how to analyze sequence data through the DNAMA Volunteer Sequence Validation Corps.



Jon Sommer

Beginners Workshop Coleader

Jon Sommer has led mushroom forays, given lectures on a range of mycological topics and taught mushroom identification across the U.S. for more than 45 years. He is a well-known speaker and presenter for mycological societies and forays. He received a bachelor's degree in Botany from Humboldt State University and master's degrees in Botany and Plant Pathology from the University

of California, Davis. He has studied mushroom identification with notable mycologists, including Drs. David Largent, Orson K. Miller, Jr. and Harry D. Thiers. A resident of Colorado for 30 years who now lives on the Oregon coast, Jon has in-depth knowledge of fungi across North America. He is the immediate past president of [Colorado Mycological Society \(CMS\)](#) and serves currently as president of the [Lincoln County Mycological Society \(LCMS\)](#).



Melissa Klotka

Polypore Carving Workshop, coLeader Beginner's Workshop

Melissa Klotka has been a board member of the [NAMA-affiliated Wisconsin Mycological Society \(WMS\)](#) since 2019, has served as its president. She serves as Foray Director for the TriCounty Foray as well as the Bayfield Rustic Camping Foray and shares the role of Committee Chair for the WMS

Events Committee as well as the Wisconsin Wild Mushroom Certification Class Committee. When she started out in mycology in 2019, her goal was to host more events to cover the great State of Wisconsin; since that time, she has increased the number of events from 8 to 22 one-day forays and has been instrumental in adding the Northwoods Foray retreat to the WMS roster, as well as creating the Bayfield Rustic Camping and TriCounty Forays.



Spike Mikulski

Culinary Arts Team Lead Spike Mikulski is the Executive Chef at Pot au Feu Bistro in Providence, Rhode Island, where he gets to prepare and serve foraged ingredients you can't find on any other menu in New England. Spike is Rhode Island's first mushroom forager approved by the

State to sell wild mushrooms commercially and he teaches the RI certification program once a year for those interested in foraging mushrooms for local restaurants and markets. During the rainy season, Spike enjoys studying the Amanitaceae, some of which make up his top ten edibles. He utilizes his experience with *Amanita* as Northeast specialist for the [Poisons Help; Emergency Identification for Mushrooms & Plants](#) Facebook group. He has taken a fascination to learning food molds and plant pathogens commonly seen in the modern kitchen, observing occurrences like "sour-rot" on sweet potato caused by *Geotrichum candidum* (utilized in cheese making) or garlic bulbs being parasitized by *Penicillium corymbiferum* (known for its antibiotic properties). Spike has a few of his dishes featured on Instagram at [@1wd2ef3rg4th5yj6uk7il](#) and some educational *Amanita* identification videos on his YouTube Channel.



Alan Bergo

Culinary Arts Workshop Presenter Chef Alan Bergo, aka [The Forager Chef](#), is a James Beard Award-winning chef, author, show host and forager. He has been writing about cooking wild food for over a decade. Let him show you why foraging is the most delicious thing you'll ever do.



Anthony Michael Blowers

Anthony Michael Blowers grew up in Richland, Michigan, where foraging for morel mushrooms with his brother at the age of 12 sparked a lifelong passion for fungi, plants and the natural world. His studies focus primarily on field mycology, with additional study of wild plants. For over 15 years he has been

creating and sharing inspired dishes from his foraged finds. He teaches classes throughout Michigan on safe foraging practices, identification, cooking techniques and more. Anthony is currently writing a cookbook with an emphasis on wild food and is the founder of [I Love Wild Mushrooms](#), a global community on Facebook with over 347,000 members.



Kathy Yerich

Coauthor of the popular and accessible field guide *Mushrooms of the Upper Midwest* (Adventure Publications, 2014), Kathy hasn't encountered a craft she isn't interested in trying! She joined the NAMA-affiliated [Minnesota Mycological Society \(MMS\)](#) almost 20 years ago, mostly to learn about edibles. NAMA forays have brought her around the continent to meet

wonderful people while expanding her knowledge of mushrooms and their unlimited uses! She currently serves as NAMA's Marketing Committee Chair and aspires to make learning about mushrooms fun and accessible to everyone.



Ginger McKey

Ginger McKey's artwork is inspired by her awe of nature, her passion for mushroom foraging and her love of a good treasure hunt. She creates fungi, animals and landscapes from an eclectic assortment of salvaged, thrifted and natural materials. She happily admits that her recent move to Oregon was motivated largely by a desire to spend more time wandering the woods in search of fungi and inspiration. Ginger

currently serves as Chair of NAMA's Visual Arts Committee. Her work can be found on Instagram at [@freerangeguppies](#).



Kristen Blizzard

Kristen Blizzard has been chasing wild mushrooms and crafting with them for over a decade. She is cocreator of [Modern Forager](#) and [GeoForager](#), and author of *Wild Mushrooms: A Cookbook and Foraging Guide* (Skyhorse Publishing, 2020). She is also your NAMA Web Administrator and a member of the core Annual Foray team. Kristen and her husband Trent reside in coastal Oregon, where they enjoy mushrooms all year long! 🍄



NAMA Affiliated Club Spotlight

Meet Vermont Mycological Society!

JESS EVANS, PRESIDENT, PIONEER VALLEY MYCOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION

photos provided by author and VMS



VMS founder and president
Bethany Beech.

In 1907, mycologist Gertrude Simmons Burlingame wrote, “Vermont is undoubtedly one of the richest of the New England states in the number and variety of its fleshy fungi...”¹. If you have ever forayed in Vermont, perhaps even attended NAMA New England in Marlboro this last September, you know this to be true.

After searching for *Russula* and *Lactarius* species in Newfane, VT, just north of Marlboro, Burlingame noted that “Forests of balsam fir, spruce, and hemlock are numerous. The deciduous woods are made up principally of maples, beeches, yellow and paper birch, and aspens...Except along the Connecticut and the lower valley of the West River, chestnut groves are lacking.”¹ The woods have not changed much since then, except for the total loss of mature chestnut trees and the more recent decline of beeches due to beech leaf disease caused by the roundworm *Litylenchus crenatae* ssp. *mccannii*.



Well-attended VMS mushroom foray



VMS foray at Sterling College, with guestleader Dr. Laura Spence

[Vermont Mycological Society](#)

[\(VMS\)](#) founding member Annabelle Langlois calls the perfect Vermont woods for a foray “the noble hardwoods.” She notes that these are

“ectomycorrhizal hardwoods that favor rich environments: oaks, hickory, beech, walnut...” It doesn’t take much of a stretch of the imagination to see Vermont’s gorgeous deep woods through this lens. These are the woods in which VMS forays, following in the footsteps of Burlingame along with Charles Frost and others.



VMS board members at NAMA New England: Samuel Albright, Carolyn Dugas, Annabelle Langlois and Bethany Beech.

Now, imagine that you’re a newly formed club, in the second drought year in a row—and NAMA is coming to your area to put on their Annual Foray! In fact, the foray location of Potash Hill in Marlboro, Vermont is just minutes from your house. Bethany Beech, president and founder of VMS, faced just such a monumental task last year and, by all accounts and measures, did a

phenomenal job of both cohosting the foray while still forming the club.

In December of 2024, when I received an email from the wonderful folks at NAMA as they began to seek partnerships for their Annual Foray, planned for September 2025 in Marlboro, VT, I immediately thought of Bethany of the fledgling VMS and reached out to her (as did several others, including Bethany’s friends from the [New York Mycological Society](#)). I had just met Bethany in October at the [Northeast Mycological Federation \(NEMF\)](#) annual Samuel Ristich Foray on Cape Cod. At the NEMF foray, we chatted briefly about the joys and challenges of organizing a club and talked about staying connected. In January, Bethany and I met to talk more about the framework for forming an official club.



Iris Langlois with spring fungal finds.

By September 2025, VMS was up, running and excelling. A quick timeline for sure but it makes sense when you consider the dedicated folks behind the magic.

Beyond Bethany as the club's founder and president, the VMS board includes Sam Albright (Bethany's partner and club treasurer), Carolyn Dugas on social media, Annabelle Langlois and Charlotte Rosenthal. Bethany moved from New York to Vermont and found that Vermont didn't have a unified mushroom club after the passing of Stephanie Miner (1929–2023) of the last

Vermont Mycological Society, which had been defunct for a number of years. Bringing along a passion for *Lactarius*, Bethany felt strongly about creating a mycocommunity in Vermont and began meeting other Vermont mushroomers while attending regional forays such as NEMF.

With 92 paid members as of August 2025, VMS is a very small club covering a very large area. In order to navigate hosting walks that are accessible to members, Bethany and her crew of dedicated board members have designed a system of regions within Vermont, with walks taking place in the northern, central or southern portions of the state. This regional coverage is necessary to ensure that folks living in the northern part of the state don't have to drive 4-plus hours to attend a club walk, nor vice versa for those living in southern Vermont. Walks are evenly distributed throughout the season to make sure there is at least one walk available to everyone each month. In the 2025 season, VMS held 20 forays for its members—no small feat for a brand-new club!



VMS teamed with Vermont Fungal Scientific Advisory Group at Coolidge State Forest.

Beyond those 20 forays, VMS served as main host club for NAMA New England last September, along with many regional clubs such as [Monadnock Mushroom Club](#) (southern New Hampshire); [Boston Mycological Club](#) and [New Hampshire Mycological Society](#). Members of VMS delivered featured presentations, planned individual forays, volunteered and advocated for East-Coast mushroom representatives to serve as faculty and mushroom identifiers. As Bethany noted about the process, “It was a full-time job but not unmanageable!” One of the largest issues in foray planning, from her perspective, was the patchwork of land organizations in the Northeast. Rather than having to get permission to

foray from just one or two large orgs such as the Bureau of Land Management, NAMA New England necessitated obtaining permission from a number of small landowners and conservation organizations.

Bethany and the VMS board offer numerous exciting programs for members 2026. They would like to add winter content as well, including lectures, mycophagy events and mushroom-crafting opportunities. In addition, Bethany notes that she would love to find some of Gertrude Burlingame’s type-specimen species of *Russula* and *Lactarius* as well as Frost’s boletes (*Exudoporus frostii*).

Bethany looks forward to welcoming more new members and continuing to plan great events

and educational opportunities for VMS. Although the winters are long and dark in Vermont, the downtime from fresh macrofungi provides opportunity for study and planning for the season ahead. Annabelle Langlois adds that “identifying wild mushrooms is an art best learned via mentorship rather than from books alone, which makes clubs indispensable. Clubs are the best platform for the transmission of accurate and safe field-mycology knowledge.” Fingers crossed for a rainy, productive and joyful 2026 for Vermont Mycological Society! 🍄

IDENTIFYING WILD MUSHROOMS IS AN ART BEST LEARNED VIA MENTORSHIP RATHER THAN FROM BOOKS ALONE, WHICH MAKES CLUBS INDISPENSABLE.

CLUBS ARE THE BEST PLATFORM FOR THE TRANSMISSION OF ACCURATE AND SAFE FIELD-MYCOLOGY KNOWLEDGE.

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New Hampshire Mycological Society

SANDRA PATTON, CLUB RELATIONS COMMITTEE

photos provided by author and NHMS

For me, the best part of being a NAMA member is connecting with mycophiles from across the country and learning about fungi in other regions. Writing club spotlight articles is especially rewarding, as it allows me to learn about the many ways that mushroom clubs fruit and spread their mycelial networks. But let's get past the metaphors and on to the New Hampshire Mycological Society (NHMS). Pictured below is the team that started this club.

Meet the Instigators Dream Team



Christine Gagnon
Founder & President



Meaghan Winders
coPresident



Rick Colman
Treasurer

The following is a paraphrased and abbreviated timeline of major club milestones, conveniently captured on Facebook, where they got their start. I definitely found some fun nuggets of inspiration but unless you love scrolling for hours, I highly advise clubs to document their history not only on Facebook but also in a more accessible format. Note: asterisked items were not posted on Facebook but perhaps should have been! Ideas, suggestions and conclusions based on the events appear in italics.

Dec 16, 2023 - Christine Gagnon started it all by creating the [New Hampshire Mycological Society public Facebook Group](#). She shared it with all of her myco friends and other myco groups. Friends Meaghan Winders and Rick Colman were among the first to join the group.

Dec 19, 2023 - Christine: Yay! We just passed 200 members! Let's keep it going.

***June 10, 2024** - The first Zoom meeting with Christine, Meaghan and Rick. Virtual meetings are great for organizing, plus many apps will create transcripts for you. Between meetings, NHMS leadership uses group chats to brainstorm, discuss plans and stay up to date.

July 4, 2024 - Rick: one of the first of many steps is to create a mission statement. We feel this summarizes NHMS' intent and direction pretty well.

"Fostering knowledge, inclusivity and enthusiasm for fungi, the New Hampshire Mycological Society unites a community passionate about mushrooms. Through education, exploration and advocacy, we promote sustainable practices, deepen understanding and inspire a profound connection to the mushroom kingdom and its ecology."

***July 15, 2024** - Selected and voted on board members. Christine Gagnon (president), Rick Colman (VP), Meaghan Winders (secretary), Caitlin Costello (treasurer), Colleen Bellows (cotreasurer) and Kyme Lampro (cosecretary). *NHMS has a goal of becoming a 501(c)(3), so they started on the right path by forming a board of directors and creating a mission statement. Some positions are held by two people—brilliant idea!*

July 17, 2024 - Meaghan: The New Hampshire Mycological Society had its media debut in *The Hippo*! NHMS founder Christine Gagnon was interviewed and discussed who we are, what our mission is and shared the details of our upcoming walk.

July 24, 2024 - Rick: We have a logo! We expect everyone to have it tattooed by month's end!

Rick Colman designed their logo. Look within your membership for talents you can use.

July 27, 2024 - Meaghan authored an article about NHMS for *Natural Farmer Magazine*.

Local publications are a great way to get the word out about your club.

July 27, 2024 - Christine: Our inaugural walk as a club was a success!

Thanks to everyone who came out to Stark Park and showed so much interest. For me, the most unexpected bonus was having Dr. Gordon Walker at our walk! For those who don't know Gordon, check him out on TikTok and Instagram. *It never hurts to ask; you may be surprised. Meaghan saw online that Gordon would be in the area and invited him. He was more than happy to support the new club.*

Aug 10, 2024 - Rick: I'll still be working some of the kinks out (I'm not an IT guy, but I play one on the Internet), but we have NHMS' website up and running. To reach out, our email is nhmysociety@gmail.com. Baby steps, people, baby steps.

This one's for the Club Relations Committee: it's time to research and review website platform options for clubs to consider.

Aug 31, 2024 - Meaghan: What a perfect day for a mushroom walk! A huge thank you to Jeff for hosting our 2nd walk at Groundswell Farms in Newmarket





today. We had a great turnout and enjoyed the many thoughtful questions everyone asked us. We loved all of your enthusiasm!

Sept 23, 2024 - Christine: Kyme Rocheleau Lampro and I joined a group of Girl Scouts on a walk around Gunnison Lake yesterday. We located and identified mushrooms along the way. It was a good day of fun and learning.

Responding to community requests is always rewarding, especially when it involves kids who soak up information like sponges.

Sept 29, 2024 - Meaghan: Thank you to everyone who stopped by the NHMS educational booth at the Fantastic Forage Mushroom Festival. We are all feeling inspired by the support we've received from the community as we start this journey!

Take advantage of mycology events in your area sponsored by other groups. Volunteer to lead a walk or teach a workshop, which usually comes with a free vending or educational space.

Nov 29, 2024 - Meaghan: On Tuesday, NHMS board members Meaghan Winders and Colleen Brown Bellows visited the 7th and 8th-grade science classes at the Henniker Community School to help them learn how to identify mushrooms. It was a wonderful opportunity for NHMS to share knowledge and encourage the younger generations to become interested in mycology.



NHMS/Girl Scouts walk at Gunnison Lake.

***April 24, 2025** - NHMS officially became a domestic nonprofit corporation in the state of NH. Another step required to become a 501(c)(3).

June 8, 2025 - Rick: A HUGE thanks to my fellow NHMS team members, Henniker Brewing Company and everyone who came to our first Mushroom Mingle and Membership Drive. It was a great success, and it was awesome to see both new and familiar faces.

Social events are a great way to recruit new members and build connections between members. Many breweries are happy to host groups without having to pay for event space.



June 21, 2025 - Meaghan: Tomorrow is our first walk of 2025 at the Gonic Trails in Rochester from 9 to 12 to see what fungi are popping. Free for members, \$5 for nonmembers.

July 9, 2025 - Christine: We have a members-only walk on private land this Sunday. People with property are often curious about what mushrooms they have.

Many will reach out on social media to ask for someone to walk their property to identify them. So, watch for these opportunities.

Aug 10, 2025 - Rick: Still very dry out there but we had a great day of learning with the Boston Mycological Club in Hollis, NH. Special thanks to David Babik and Jonathan Kranz for the invite. *No matter your skill level, always try to get in on a walk; it's how we learn. Partnering with nearby mushroom clubs is always win-win.*

A photograph of two women smiling and holding large mushrooms. Behind them is a banner for the "The New Hampshire Mycological Society" event. The banner text includes: "AT THE HENNIKER BREWING COMPANY! 129 CENTERVALE RD. HENNIKER, NH", "Sunday, June 8, 2025 at 1PM - 4PM", "Mushroom Mingle & Membership Drive!", and "Public · Event by Christine Gagnon and New Hampshire Mycological Society".

AT THE HENNIKER BREWING COMPANY!
129 CENTERVALE RD. HENNIKER, NH
Sunday, June 8, 2025 at 1PM - 4PM
Mushroom Mingle & Membership Drive!
Public · Event by Christine Gagnon and New Hampshire Mycological Society

Sept 24, 2025 - Meaghan: Come hang out with us at the 10th Annual Fantastic Forage Mushroom Festival this weekend. We will be leading a walk on Saturday and doing an edibles/ID talk on Sunday. Feel free to stop by our table as well throughout the weekend!

Sept 29, 2025 - Meaghan: Come join us for a free/public guided walk in conjunction with the Milton Conservation Commission and Moose Mountains Regional Greenways.

Conservation areas, and other nonprofit natural areas often allow mushroom clubs to lead walks on their land, provided you document the fungi you find.

**** Oct 30, 2025** - Christine applied for NHMS to become a NAMA-affiliated club. *Becoming a NAMA affiliate has lots of benefits. If your club is interested, contact NAMA Membership Manager Luke Smithson at membershipmanager@namyco.org.*

Nov 16, 2025 - Meaghan: Thank you to those who joined us for our end-of-season potluck and Mushroom Mingle. It was a great, low-key and fun evening of chatting, sharing ideas and getting to know one another a bit more! *Many clubs sponsor end-of-year gatherings in some form.*

Jan 26, 2025 - Christine: Don't miss NH's own Rick Van de Poll's NAMA talk on rare fungi and how to protect them! *Inform your members about NAMA opportunities to view a webinar or attend a foray.*

**** Feb 17, 2026** - NHMS officially became a NAMA-affiliated mushroom club!



NHMS-led walk at Fantastic Forage Mushroom Festival.

Mar 25, 2026 - Meaghan: Great turnout for our first NHMS walk of 2026!! We explored around one of the few remaining Atlantic White Cedar swamps in the area, looking for one of the FunDiS rare fungi, *Echinodontium ballouii*. No luck with that but we found lots of others. *Stay tuned to organizations like iNaturalist, FUNDIS, and Mycota lab to learn about events your club can participate in.*

The NHMS' Facebook group has grown to over 2300 members and serves as a forum for advertising NHMS events, recruiting members and educating the mycocurious. Some club events are open to the public while others are members-only or have a small fee for nonmembers. They also post about nonclub but mushroom-related events.

NHMS group admins also employ some very creative ways to use the Facebook group for mushroom education. Rick Colman did a series of posts on mycological



terms; we all know the language of fungi can be daunting at first. Christine Gagnon has played both “Who Am I?” and “Cap and Stem” to teach mushroom identification; “Who am I” is a picture of an entire mushroom, while “Cap and Stem” only reveals the cap or stem portion of a mushroom. A favorite among the group is submitting mushroom pictures to be used as the group’s cover photo. Everyone votes by liking the submissions. This one, called “Dog on Chicken” submitted by Jenny Gardner in July 2024, won hands-down that month.

*Dog on
Chicken*
(photo:
Jenny
Gardner)

There is also the fabulous photography of coPresident Meaghan Winders, who has a camera in hand at every walk and event. She definitely has a keen eye for small and unusual fungi, which she always researches to provide species names with her posts. Pictured here is a collage of a few photos she has posted to the NHMS group.

The NHMS club is off to a great start by regularly offering walks during the mushroom season, tabling and educating at community events, and building community through their Facebook group and Mushroom Mingles. What is next for NHMS? They have quite a bucket list for their future: become a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, find a meeting space for monthly club meetings, recruit speakers for meetings, build a club resource library, microscopy classes, submit specimens for DNA sequencing and more! We look forward to watching their fungal enthusiasm reach the entire state of New Hampshire.

If you are thinking about starting a mushroom club in your area feel free to use the NHMS ideas in this article and also refer to these resources on the NAMA website. 



Research leader Dr. Amy Rossman and Collections Manager Shannon Dominick pull specimens from among the million plus comprising the U.S. National Fungus Collections (photo: Peggy Greb).

OLIVER FILIALUNA (THEY/
THEM), VOUCHER COLLECTION
PROJECT COMMITTEE, FORAY
PLANNING COMMITTEE, NAMA
INSTAGRAM FACILITATOR

DR. ANDREW WILSON, CHAIR,
VOUCHER COLLECTION PROJECT
COMMITTEE

The mycelial network is abuzz with news of a troubling possibility: the decommissioning of the Beltsville Agricultural Research Center (BARC), home of the U.S. National Fungus Collection, known under the collection code of BPI¹.

On April 23, 2026, the USDA announced that its Agricultural Research Service (ARS) would be “relocating research programs to facilities across the country better aligned with regional agricultural needs².” The announcement lacked any mention of the BPI collection—which comprises approximately 1,000,000 specimens—or its reference library (5,600 volumes and 75,000 pamphlets and reprints)³.

The National Fungus Collection was founded in 1869 with a transfer of fungal collections from the Smithsonian Institution to the USDA⁴. Since then, it has been a vital pathogenic resource and research center and is currently the largest collection of agriculturally relevant fungi. However, following the tragic precedent set by the Duke Herbarium closure^{5,6}, it is not hard to imagine a bleak—and potentially disastrous—future for the BPI collection.



Fortunately, efforts are being made to make our voices heard! A lawsuit has been brought by labor unions and nonprofits, with a preliminary injunction hearing scheduled for August 21, 2026⁷. [Mycological Society of America Past President Dr. David M. Geiser composed a letter](#) in response to the USDA’s restructuring, attempting to provide guidance to government workers, educational administrators and other decision makers regarding the very real value of these fungal collections.⁸ Additionally, our very own Dr. Andrew Wilson, Chair of the NAMA Voucher Collection Project, started a digital petition that needs more signatures.⁹ Please spread the word and sign the petition!!

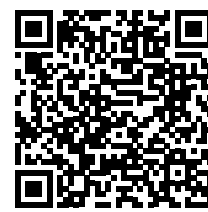
This call to action has been taken up by at least 17 other organizations and societies, including the American Institution for Biological Sciences (AIBS), the National Science Collection Alliance and the American Phytopathological Society. The joint call to action for the BPI as well as other collections located at BARC, can [be found here](#), along with their [joint letter](#).

What can you do to join the fight? The easiest thing for you to do is to follow the QR code or select the hyperlink to the [Change.org petition](#) to add your name to the petition of support for the BPI collections.

Second, **please spread the word** about the situation to your fungal friends and let them know how they can help.

Lastly, we hope you will consider **contacting your legislative representative(s)**. Look up your House Representative's email by using your zip code at the [Find Your Representative](#) website; write them directly or use [this template message](#) to share these organizational links and letters.

As a collective community of fungal enthusiasts, many of us share passion and enthusiasm for the hidden power of fungal collections. In the interest of continuing to understand fungi better and better, we must protect, promote and utilize these invaluable resources such as the U.S. National Fungus Collections (BPI) that are vital to the advancement of the field of mycology—and to the fungi themselves as vital cornerstones of the natural world. 📌



CLICK OR SCAN

This QR code if you'd like to sign the petition to support these invaluable resources.

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COMA Educational Outreach Program Featured in Local Newspaper



photos provided by author

LISA SOLOMON,
CONNECTICUT-
WESTCHESTER
MYCOLOGICAL
ASSOCIATION
(COMA)

The Rivertowns Dispatch, a newspaper that covers the Westchester County villages of Ardsley, Dobbs Ferry, Hastings-on-Hudson and Irvington, featured COMA's signature educational outreach program, *Wild Facts About Wild Mushrooms*, in its June 5, 2026 edition. The article gives NAMA a shout-out.



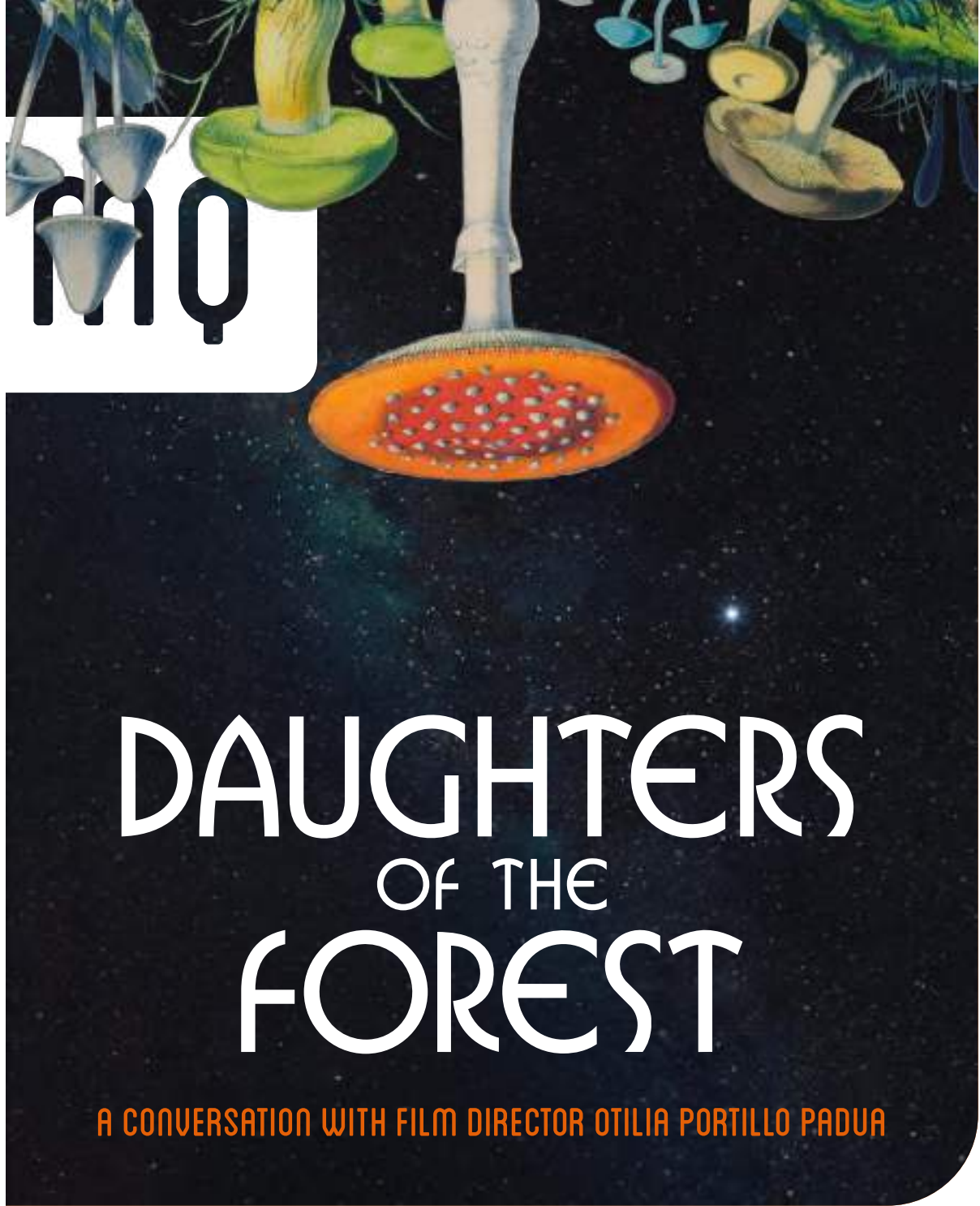
The goal of the introductory-level program is to get attendees to become fascinated with wild mushrooms and to encourage them to participate in the hobby we all love. The presentation delves into the wide variety of colors, shapes, sizes and even scents found in fungi, challenging common myths along the way. Participants learn to identify major genera and their defining characteristics, discover essential gear for forest foraging and review safety rules for collecting and cooking edible varieties.

The session also covers emerging frontiers in mycology, how fungi can help save the world. It provides connections to NAMA-affiliated [Connecticut-Westchester Mycological Association \(COMA\)](#), [Connecticut Valley Mycological Society \(CVMS\)](#) and [New York Mycological Society \(NYMS\)](#); and recommends books for beginners, mobile apps and online mushroom-identification communities.

As chair of COMA's Outreach Committee, I developed the program early this year. By the end of the 2026 mushroom season in the Northeast, it will have been presented at 20 public libraries throughout Westchester County, from Peekskill and Somers in the northern part of the county to Yonkers and Mount Vernon in the south, as well as for the Friends of the Old Croton Aqueduct at the Old Croton Aqueduct Historic State Park. All of the library programs are free and open to the public, in accordance with the hosts' educational missions. 🍄



Lisa Solomon has been an avid amateur mushroom hunter and an active COMA member for more than 20 years.



mq

DAUGHTERS OF THE FOREST

A CONVERSATION WITH FILM DIRECTOR OTILIA PORTILLO PADUA

photos are stills from the film unless otherwise noted.

BY MAYA HAN,
CULTURAL PROGRAMMER
FOR NEW YORK
MYCOLOGICAL SOCIETY

In the riveting opening scene of the film *Daughters of the Forest*, two women—one a wizened centenarian and the other her granddaughter seven decades younger—sit at a rustic kitchen table brimming with a fresh harvest of mushrooms.



With a quiet determination and a quickness belying her age, the *abuela* Doña Julia¹ identifies each in her native language, in a litany of names that feels like both a conjuring of ancestral traditions and spirits and an anchoring of her *nieta* into a millennia-spanning mycological lineage. The mysterious sounds of Pjiekakjoo are translated onscreen: *penny bun*, *morel*, *black elfin saddle*, *white elfin saddle*, *chanterelle*, *funnel cap*, *saffron milkcap*, *clustered gray agaric*, *carmine coral* and so on, in a mesmerizing commingling—and codification—of Indigenous knowledge and Western “scientific” training. We witness in real time a schooling in the “mother tongue” and unspooling of a veritable mycological *mitochondrial* DNA (from ancient Greek, μῑτος, or “thread”)—a matrilineal process in an intimate act interweaving cultural instruction, entrusting, bequeathing and, ultimately, preservation. We learn that the Doña Julia is one of the last remaining speakers of the nearly extinct Pjiekakjoo²—a language incomparably rich with mycological terminology and knowledge—and that these acts of translation are both Lis’s life’s work as a scientist and her race against time and cultural extinction. This powerful scene showcases the spectacular fungal diversity of this region³ and offers a privileged window into a rarely-glimpsed world, with which many North American mycophile spectators may be unfamiliar.

Centered on these two Pjiekakjoo women and a third from the Zapotec, *Daughters of the Forest* is the enthralling new film by Mexican director Otilia Portillo Padua. An alluring hybrid of documentary and sci-fi, this long overdue work addresses the under-represented realm of Indigenous mycologies and presents new possibilities for ecological coexistence, care and repair. It has been captivating audiences internationally, including at its New York premiere in May 2026 at the Margaret Mead Film Festival, where I was honored to present the film on behalf of the [NAMA-affiliated New York Mycological Society](#). Portillo Padua generously took time from a whirlwind film festival tour to grant an interview, excerpted as follows:

Maya Han: Otilia, thank you so much for taking time out of your marathon schedule to share a bit about yourself and your film with the mycological community. First of all, can you tell us what the impetus was for this film? What initially inspired you to make it?

Otilia Portillo Padua: Thank you Maya for the interview and the time. It was an





essay by science fiction writer Ursula K. Le Guin called *The Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction*. In this essay, she redefines technology as a cultural carrier bag rather than a weapon for domination. Prior

to the sword used by the Hero to kill, there was a container, a holder of stories, a bag of stars and—why not?—a basket of mushrooms!

MH: Mexico has dozens of Indigenous groups. Why did you choose these two particular groups [Zapotec and Pjiekakjoo] and these three particular characters?

OPP: Through the College of Postgraduates, we met a few students that came from different regions in Mexico. We met Juli and Lis in the process. We didn't specifically start with a region. Juli had just finished her bachelor's and wanted to pursue a master's; she also had this very interesting back story with the Holy Mushroom. Lis had already founded the Hongueras Pjeikakjoo in 2016 and had documented almost 200 species of edible mushrooms. We wanted to create a fungal film that didn't exclusively focus on one aspect of fungi but felt part of a bigger ecosystem with human and nonhuman entanglements. Lis's and her grandmother Julia's story is the story of a community. Juli has a more personal story. In many ways, both stories complement each other.



MH: What was your connection to this story, if any? Did you have any particular connection to mushrooms or mycology in your life? Were you exposed to either in your childhood or family life and lore?





OPP: I don't recall having such a clear connection to mushrooms in my past. But now they've become something very personal because they have taught me about connection, relationships, survival and, most importantly, how to relate to loss differently. Loss is very present in this story. In the traditional three-act structure, there is an "all is lost" moment; this normally happens about three fourths of the way into a movie. Our film follows a more mycelial structure but there is still that lingering question: what do you do with what you've lost or will lose? Fungi allow me to see other possibilities.

MH: What was your knowledge of mushrooms and mycology prior to embarking on this film project? What is your relationship to these fields, and/or your view of mushrooms and mycology, now? Alternatively, has working on this film impacted your view of Mexican culture, Indigenous cultures, ecology and filmmaking in any way?

OPP: I had very little knowledge of mushrooms. Six years ago, I didn't even know what mycelium meant. The more I discover, the more fascinated I am by mushrooms and the more stories I feel can be told about them, all in different forms and shapes. That is also why the film has a secondary title, *Mycelium Chronicles*. I was inspired by the idea of world-building and it was important that this fungal story was just one among many more waiting to be unraveled. Fungi have now shaped how I interpret the world and the relationships in it. I think once fungi inoculate your life, there is no going back.

MH: From the film's title to the main characters, to the filmmaking team, this film centers women. Can you tell me how much the women-centric, and the matriarchal, reflects the mycological culture in Mexico, either historically or contemporaneously? In your experience, to what extent are women central to the foraging, preparation of, study of mushrooms/fungi, either in a culinary, medicinal, shamanistic or other cultural, ecological or scientific sense?

OPP: Most of the foragers and scientists I met were women and most of the culinary preparations are done by women. So I would say women are central to the mycological culture in Mexico in the past, in the present and, very likely, in its future. I do want to mention that men also forage; a lot of the time they go to remote areas of difficult access to find very sought-after mushrooms. Foraging is a family activity.





MH: The figure of Maria Sabina looms large in the Western views and knowledge of Mexican mycology. As a Mexican, how much were you aware of her story, myth and legacy?

Was it well known to you? What is your view of her?

OPP: It's hard to express all the feelings Maria Sabina triggers. I knew about her even before I knew what mycelium meant. She is obviously legendary and changed the history of mushrooms in the world—but she also had an incredibly hard life and it's hard not to feel like there was a betrayal of trust in her story. I always think about her when I think about reciprocity and working across different backgrounds and contexts.



MH: Can you tell me more about the Doña Julia character? Specifically, how you first learned of or heard about her?

OPP: When I first met Lis in person, she introduced me to her mother Cristina and grandmother Julia. Lis was always clear to me that she was sharing knowledge that wasn't exclusive to her and that had been shared with her by her ancestors. She showed me her thesis, which was based on the knowledge of her two grandmothers and other community members. When I met Lis, her grandmother José passed shortly after so we didn't have a chance to meet her, but Lis mentioned that José referred to mushrooms as her "husband" because they provided her with everything she needed to survive. As for Doña Julia, it was a gift to be able to record her final years and share part of her story with the world.



MH: There is a tremendous sense of trust between you and Doña Julia and the other characters, a testament to your skills and sensitivity as a filmmaker. Did it take much convincing on your part to get her involved or was she open to participating from the outset? What was it like to work with her on this film? Do you have any particularly stand-out moments filming with her, or any particular takeaways from that experience? Are there other figures like her throughout Mexico or was she unique? Alternatively, to what extent is she typical or representative of a type of figure in Tlahuica-Pjiekakjoo culture?

OPP: I will always be grateful to the professors at the College of Postgraduates for their generosity. Dr. Jesús Moreno kindly opened the doors to his laboratory, his networks, his colleagues and his students. Without them, I don't think we would have gotten to establish the relationships we did. We built trust upon an already-existing trust based on years of working together among different communities.

Doña Julia was always very open about sharing her knowledge of mushrooms. She had great memory and was very intelligent and practical. Sometimes I would ask her very abstract questions and she would reply very practically. Mushrooms, above anything for her, were what her family ate when they faced scarcity and were just delicious. She would always tell us how to cook them.

Doña Julia is unique but also universal. Her knowledge about mushrooms and her language is one of a kind. She was one of the last speakers of Tlahuica-Pjiekakjoo language. She also reminds people of their own grandmother, and what their grandmothers mean for them, no matter where they come from.

MH: Can you tell me about the two leading “characters” Lis and Juli — are they largely “outliers” or are there more Indigenous people migrating over to the “Western” sciences of university studies?

OPP: I think Lis and Juli are incredibly special but they also represent a generation in the intersection of tradition and other more academic forms of knowledge. We have had an opportunity to meet more students of the College of Postgraduates from different areas, such as Botany or Earth Sciences. The more access to other forms of education, the more diversity of backgrounds of the students. All this can only enrich academia and the other way around.





MH: In your film, some of the obstacles or challenges that Lis and Juli faced in the pursuit of their work or studies are vividly depicted. However, they are portrayed as relatively supported by their families in terms of their choice of studies. Do you know if they met any resistance from their families or communities about venturing outside of the Indigenous realm and/or sharing their cultures with the “outside” world? Can you comment on the broader integration of or views of integrating Indigenous knowledge and culture with Western science? For example, to what extent are Mexican universities acknowledging or integrating or working in collaboration with these local cultures in their faculty, curricula or coursework?

OPP: It has been beautiful to see Hongueras Pjiekakjoo grow into the recognized collective it is. Lis is a respected member of her community and they support each other. They have a strong sense of communication and understanding, and the authorities have expressed strong admiration for her work. The last time we spoke with the authorities they were happy that their knowledge of fungi was being known and recognized.

I can’t comment with profound knowledge about the integration of Indigenous knowledge into Western science in academic settings—but I will say that ethnomycology is a very important academic field in the mycology circles in Mexico. Dr. Gaston Guzman was a pioneer in the field of ethnomycology. Today, there are highly respected academics with diverse backgrounds all across Mexico. One of the leading figures in the study of *Boletus* is Dra. Olivia Ayala, one of Juli’s mentors in the film. She is Mixe, from Oaxaca, and a brilliant academic and researcher. So I would say that the College of Postgraduates has done a lot of work to bridge diverse forms of knowledge.

MH: Alternatively, have you noticed differences in the approach to mushrooms/fungi and mycology in the Pjiekakjoo and/or Zapotec cultures vs. Western “scientific” approaches and can you elaborate in terms of the process of foraging or engaging in a foray, preparation of mushrooms, cultural attitudes towards mushrooms, uses of, etc.?

OPP: This is a hard question for me to answer, because I don’t think I have enough understanding of either method, but I’ve been told anecdotally that the





Holy Mushroom doesn't like it when you cut it in pieces even when it's for taxonomic or research purposes.

MH: Fascinating! This one is more an observation rather than

a question: One of the many compelling themes of the film is not just that of knowledge, but different forms of knowledge and knowing. The characters mention, "If you don't know your forest, you won't know how to care of it" and later, "Nobody can love what they don't know." I want to applaud you on addressing those nuances. I often lament the West's privileging of scientific "rational" knowledge as the only valid, or the superior, form of "knowing." I am reminded of the etymology of the word, from the Old English *cnāwan*, Latin *gnoscere*, to the Proto-Indo-European root **ǵneh₃-*, all containing a rich, full sense of knowledge in all its amplitude—including possibly the more intuitive, inchoate, "feminine" ways of knowing—its "preceding," "embryonic" acts of recognizing, "seeing" or "acknowledging" something into existence—as well as our more contemporary understanding of knowledge as the "concluding" or "conclusive," reified, "validated" scientific, factual or empirical data, which is just really only one type of knowledge.



OPP: Thank you for sharing this. You know this reminds of how some female writers, Afrofuturists and Indigenous writers approach sci-fi. It's sci-fi based on other forms of knowledge, not only technology, hard sciences, empirical data or the scientific method. Ursula K. Leguin wrote sci-fi inspired by intuition, empathy, subjective truth and anthropology. Rather than conquering the





unknown, there is a sense in her work of putting value on community and preservation as human achievements.

MH: Do you think mycological culture is unique or special or distinctive in Mexico vs. other countries or cultures? If so, in what ways?

OPP: The more I have found about mushrooms, the more I have discovered about multiple mycological cultures around the world. Some countries and cultures have ancient ties to mushrooms and some are more recent. Many cultures approach the fungal world from many different perspectives. A few years ago, [Fungi Foundation](#) founder [Giuliana Furci](#) mentioned in a lecture she gave to a group of enthusiasts that Mexico was a mushroom. I really was inspired by that notion.

MH: In the film we see Doña Julia as the emblem of Indigenous cultures in peril and at risk of extinction. For obvious reasons and ways, it mirrors the larger perils of extinction in the biological/ecological world, and often feels like a race against time and a daunting if not hopeless task. What is your view on ethnomycological (and, by extension, ethnobotanical and larger ethnocultural) preservation, if any?

OPP: I think it's crucial, and very related to your comment about appreciating and giving equal importance to other systems of knowledge, and about protecting through knowledge. I see Lis and her collaborators as true visionaries, given the impact they've had with Hongueras Pjeikakjoo over the last 10 years, working with what they have: the mushrooms they and their ancestors knew so well. Through small, local and collective actions, they changed many aspects of their community and territory. For decades, their community has fought against deforestation; now the fungi has also become a part of their resistance. By identifying and naming all the 200 mushrooms, they also saved knowledge about their forest and culture from getting lost.

MH: Have Lis and Juli seen this film, and/or have you screened this film in their communities? If so, can you tell me a bit about what the reaction or reception has been?

OPP: We haven't yet, but we're planning to as part of the impact campaign. We're still in conversation with the authorities in both San Juan Atzingo and Lomas de Teocalzingo in terms of timing.





Film Director
Ortilia Portillo Padua.



MH: What kind of impact do you hope to have with your film? What would you like viewers of all North American identities to take away from your film?

OPP: Most of our ideas for impact are based in Mexico, as we think there is a lot of work to be done locally and for the foraging communities that are the heart of film. We also think there is lots of potential in terms of bridging Indigenous knowledge and science, language preservation, women-led stewardship of the land, mycelial networks and the fight to honor ancestral ways of life in a rapidly changing world. All of these issues have a certain replicability in many different contexts around the world. 🍄

Maya Han

Is the Cultural Programmer of the New York Mycological Society. She is a Brooklyn NY-based mycophile artist, filmmaker and writer who holds a hand lens to hidden histories. Her latest film is *Black and Brown: The New My(e)cologies*. She can be reached at hanprojects1@gmail.com or at culture@newyorkmyc.org.



For more information about the the director, the featured mycologist and the film, please visit: daughtersoftheforestfilm.com. For more information about one of the Indigenous groups featured in the film, please visit: [@hongueras pjiekakjoo](https://hongueras.pjiekakjoo).

Notes:

1. The revered Pjiekakjoo Honguera Doña Julia passed away in 2024 before the release of *Daughters of the Forest*. She was 103 years of age.
2. Pjiekakjoo (also commonly known as Tlahuica or Ocuilteco) is a critically endangered Indigenous Mexican language with fewer than 50 remaining fluent speakers, all of whom are elderly.
3. Known for its astonishing fungal diversity, with approximately 500 species of edible wild mushrooms, Mexico is second globally only to China in fungal consumption. The Tlahuica-Pjiekakjoo people of central Mexico officially recognize and harvest 202 species of wild edible fungi, marking this ethnic group as possessing the largest ethnomycological heritage in the world. Mexico includes 71 distinct Indigenous groups, each with their own mycocultural heritages, including the Zapotec who officially recognize up to 80 native edible fungal species.





Psilocybin-Containing Mushrooms

AS AN END-OF-LIFE TRANSITION TOOL

AVERY STEMPEL,
MEDICINAL
MUSHROOMS
COMMITTEE

*“Every life comes to an end,
when time demands it. A loss
of life is to be mourned, but only
if the life were wasted...”*

***Time-traveling Dr. Spock in Star Trek,
the Animated Series, Season 1, Episode 2***

It was quiet, too quiet, as I ascended the stairs. The previous night he had asked me to go to the store for him. He was looking very rough when I dropped off his supplies but he denied my efforts at persuading him to get medical attention. I left him at his insistence and told him I'd check in in the morning. I had felt an inkling while I was out running errands; he wasn't answering any of my texts or calls. Now I knew: he was gone. I opened the door to his apartment. The lights were off, his bed disheveled but empty. I scanned his home, listening, hoping for some noise, some sign, but heard nothing. I turned to the living room and there, on the couch, head in hand, he sat. Still, slumped, peaceful, dead. It is a memory that haunts me. Could I have done more, should I have done more? He was seeking peace; would prolonging his life only have continued his suffering?

The inevitability of death hangs like a shadow over us. An unforgiving pall that we attempt to disregard as we navigate our day-to-day lives. A sheer shroud draped over our shoulders. It darkens with age, snags on experiences, rips when we least expect it. Navigating the transitions during end-of-life care for our loved ones is difficult at best. Rife with trials and challenges, emotionally charged conversations and immediate, impactful decision making. During these times there aren't enough tools in the toolbox for the person whose faculties are failing, nor for the circle of friends and family who are working through the details and making the hard choices. The mind-altering effects of psilocybin-containing mushrooms have proven useful in these moments. There is mounting research on how impactful these mushrooms can be for those directly transitioning from life to death. It can also be a powerful tool for others in the circle of grief as well.* In this article I have gathered examples showing how this tool has helped people directly engaged in end-of-life care.

*please see footnotes 1 through 10.

The FDA has acknowledged psilocybin as a breakthrough therapy. With the 2018 Right to Try Act, it should be legally allowed for terminally ill patients. However, the Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) continues to block access. The push to bring psilocybin treatments to patients in palliative care and hospice programs in the United States is gaining traction among physicians specializing in end-of-life conditions (note 11). As a result, attorneys are now starting to push the DEA for approval. Attorney Kathryn Tucker has spent years fighting for the rights of terminally ill patients. *Lucid News* reporter Christine Redick interviewed her in November of 2025 for an [article detailing this fight](#). Ms. Redick quotes Tucker as saying “This multipronged, multidimensional advocacy has all been



Dr. Aggarwal presents to the NYMHA Group
at Collar City Mushrooms in Troy, NY.

driving toward one objective: allowing expert clinicians to access psilocybin to relieve debilitating anxiety and depression in patients who are dying of cancer. This care should be fully integrated into the medical treatment of people with advanced illness.” Many doctors, researchers and facilitators involved in studying the effects of psilocybin-containing mushrooms and integrating the experiences of patients who have engaged with them agree that the profoundly impactful results of consuming these substances can vastly improve the outlook of people

diagnosed with terminal illnesses (note 12).

[Dr. Sunil Kumar Aggarwal](#) is one doctor working at the forefront of using substances that promote neural plasticity during end-of-life transitions. A brief biography from Dr. Aggarwal: “I am a hospice and palliative medicine and physical medicine and rehabilitation physician and medical geographer. My primary clinical work is as an Integrative Pain, Palliative Care, and Rehabilitation Physician in private practice at AIMS Institute (Seattle, WA) and as an on-call Palliative Physician and Hospice Physician in a Puget Sound-based healthcare system. I previously ran the palliative care medicine consultation service at a community hospital and regional cancer center. My medical geographic scholarship interests are in geographies of access, delivery and development of cannabinologic and psychedelic integrative medicine, especially as they pertain to development in pain management, hospice and palliative medicine and rehabilitation services.”

At a talk with the group New Yorkers for Mental Health Alternatives (NYMHA), Dr. Aggarwal discussed the impact psilocybin-containing mushrooms can have for people who know that the time of their departure is quickly approaching:

“... people who are dying oftentimes are racked with untreatable or poorly

managed dread, existential anxiety, fear of dying. It can lead to a lot of unrelieved suffering, difficulty being with loved ones... enjoying whatever time they might have left, even severe physical pain... So if you can treat that kind of anxiety with a therapy that really changes how you think about death and dying and your own mortality, in a few hours, with preparation, with integration, with support, with the right safeguards, with the right set and setting, and that leads to a better life quality with the time they have left, it is equivalent to saving their lives... When you deal with people who don't have much time left to live and you do something to boost their life quality, you are saving their lives because that's all you can do for them..." (Dr. Aggarwal's full presentation is available by clicking [here](#).)



Julie Netherland

[Julie Netherland](#) is a medical sociologist from the United States who works in drug policy. At 55 years old she was diagnosed with metastatic breast cancer (MBC), a treatable but not curable condition. Most patients with this kind of cancer rarely survive more than five years from diagnosis. While she had concerns about models of regulation and access, she heard about the life-affirming impact that a psilocybin-containing mushroom experience can have for someone diagnosed with a terminal illness. She sought a means for securing a safe experience under the care of trained professionals. She described her experience to me:

"Faced with this diagnosis and knowing that death was probably coming for me sooner rather than later, I enrolled in a trial at NYU to study the impact of psilocybin on people living with advanced (terminal) cancer. The trial was carefully crafted and included several therapy sessions with skilled practitioners who helped me clarify my goals and intentions but also helped me talk through what it is like to confront the likelihood of a premature death. By the time I was given the medicine, I was ready to approach death with curiosity and playfulness. There are no words to explain what happened that day, but I can say that it was one of the most meaningful experiences of my life. I accessed profound grief as well as joy, and I left the experience with a number of deep insights into how to differently approach being treated for a terminal illness that eased a lot of the anxiety I had been carrying. Most importantly, I left behind any fear of death I

might have had. The session I had was over two years ago and while the details of the experience have begun to fade, my fearlessness about death has not. I can think of no greater gift than to be able to spend whatever time I have left focusing on the present and not fearing what is to come. It was truly life-altering in helping me come to terms with a terminal illness.”

Experiences with psilocybin-containing mushrooms have been slightly more accessible through professionally trained and certified medical practices in both Canada and Mexico.

[Dr. Linda Carlson](#) is a clinical health psychologist in Canada fighting for legal psilocybin access. She is also the Enbridge Research chair in Psychosocial Oncology. Dr Carlson was awarded a [breakthrough therapy grant](#) through the Canadian Cancer Society in order to expand the ease of access for patients with advanced-stage cancer conditions. Currently, psilocybin-containing mushrooms are illegal at the Canadian federal level but Health Canada has established [3 different pathways for access](#): individuals can enroll in clinical trials, can apply for an individual exemption through “subsection 56(1)” or practitioners who have been approved through the Special Access Program can facilitate psilocybin consumption. While these options exist, they often take too long to get approval for people in advanced stages of cancer to glean any benefit. Dr. Carlson and her team are working to streamline access by creating a network of doctors, clinicians, healthcare providers, policymakers and patients who understand the need for immediacy in situations that involve end-of-life care and quality of life.

John Gilchrist, [TheraPsil](#) director of communications, took some time to chat with me about efforts to legalize psychedelic substances. Founded in 2019 in British Columbia, TheraPsil is focused on ensuring that safe, regulated access is available to all Canadians where doctors and patients are allowed to determine care routines. TheraPsil has already trained over 900 practitioners from around the world. For their first class of 19 clinicians, Health Canada granted [subsection 56 exemptions](#) to each participant so that they could consume psilocybin-containing mushrooms under supervision in order to facilitate understanding of what patients would be going through.

Gilchrist brought a few impactful statistics to my attention. First, the 2023

Health Canada [substance use survey](#), which showed a 195% increase in illegal psychedelic substance use over the previous survey. The other number that was vastly profound is that 82% of people [surveyed](#) in 2021 support legal access to psilocybin-containing mushrooms during end-of-life care. While TheraPsil is working to create broader access, its team acknowledges that treatment for advanced cancer patients can be a critical component of a patient's quality of life.

We discussed [Pete Pearson](#)'s struggle to access psilocybin therapy legally. Pearson was diagnosed with a terminal lung disease. He applied for access through both the Special Access Program and a subsection 56 exemption and waited nearly a year for a decision. Both applications were denied. Health Canada stated they could not determine if he was at the end-of-life and suggested a clinical trial, despite acknowledging his disease was terminal. He was later approved for Medical Assistance in Dying (MAiD), effectively too sick to live but not sick enough to try psilocybin. Gilchrist pointed out that patients in palliative care do not experience suffering on a research timeline.

In Mexico, psilocybin-containing mushroom use is approved for ceremonial



John Gilchrist and author Avery Stempel meet over Zoom to discuss TheraPsil's work in Canada.

purposes. There are clinical retreats offering services that immerse patients in transformational experiences through a ceremonial context for a variety of reasons. End-of-Life anxiety and existential distress are two of the conditions people often claim as their reasons for engaging with these substances. Places like [PRATI](#) (the Psychedelic Research and Training Institute) in Tijuana offer courses



Medical equipment at St. Peter's Hospital in Albany, NY.

for [certified clinicians and facilitators](#) and help guests seeking to work with psilocybin-containing mushrooms as a tool to facilitate their healing.

We all fear the unknown, shrinking away from things that cause us pain, avoiding situations that cause us sorrow. As the time to transition draws closer, anxiety, stress, fear and panic can start to set in. Most people do not know their exact end point. For some, the train's departure is apparent. They sit on the bench at the station and can hear it approaching. Friends and family stand by wishing them well, holding their hand, pleading that they have an easy journey. Death is inevitable. It

comes for us all. Not only are the ones departing experiencing the challenges of its impending arrival but so too are the ones left behind.

The 2023 Indie Documentary DOSED follows the story of Laurie Brooks, mother of 4, with an advanced stage cancer diagnosis. You can watch it by donation [here](#). It is another beautiful example detailing the use of psilocybin-containing mushrooms as an aide in processing the difficulties encountered during end-of-life care.

Resources for friends and family of those who are in end-of-life care are often limited to pamphlets, videos or brief counseling sessions. Coping with impending loss, the difficulty of engaging in constructive dialogue and the challenges of creating the best environment for a person that is transitioning from life are not easy hurdles. As we navigate the sunset of someone we hold dear, every decision we encounter can feel onerous—impossible, even—and hugely impactful. Conversations are awkward, words and concepts seem inefficient and unclear.

Corinne Carey, a longtime end-of-life advocate, has been fully immersed in

the lives of terminally ill patients for over a decade as she has fought for right-to-die bills in New York and New Jersey. As her own mother began to require increasingly more care, their conversations about how to move forward proved difficult and fruitless. Trying to get her mother to see how her declining health was impacting her independence and that she would need additional assistance appeared futile. After her mother experienced some difficult care emergencies, Carey pleaded with her to consider a supported-living situation. For days, their conversations went nowhere. In exasperation, Carey decided to try a novel tactic: she consumed a low dose of psilocybin-containing mushrooms. The clarity and insights she experienced allowed her to let go of the thought that she could fully control future decisions. She released the idea that she could change her mother's mind. One of her key mental changes was embracing the concept that the only thing under her control was how she could react to the situation. She partially attributes her success in facilitating her acceptance of her mother's condition to that low dose of fungi.

Everyone wrestles with grief. Everyone struggles to understand loss. In today's nonstop world, it can be very difficult to set aside the time to navigate the murky depths of pain, distress and death. In three months of late 2024, I was washed with wave upon wave of endings and deaths. My father-in-law passed suddenly, one of my closest friends (and tenant) passed unexpectedly, I learned the building I operated my business out of had been sold, one of my most critical employees resigned, my car broke down, my home of 11 years was put up for sale, and my dog died. So many losses. So many fragments of myself had been chipped away. So many layers of identity completely stripped. The weight of all these changes in such rapid succession was incredible. Processing them while moving my business, moving my home, figuring out a new vehicle and grieving was impossible.



Finally, in late summer of 2025 I set a few days aside for a solo camping trip. I set up my tent, gathered my things and lit my campfire. I had prepared a moderate dose of psilocybin-containing mushrooms to facilitate the evening's letting-go. As I watched the flickering fingers of the fire dance along the burning wood, turning papers and cardboard into char, the weight of

all those burdens moved into the flame and danced along with the snap and crackle of the fire. Everything I had been carrying lifted, eased, traveled with the smoke through the branches above me to the stars. I watched as the fire slowly converted into sparkling embers, then began to wink entirely into darkness. I breathed my losses into the emptiness of the dying blaze and felt myself float in a way I had not been able to achieve over the previous year. After fully extinguishing the remaining embers with water and listening to the hiss and spit as the evening died, a relieved smile pulled itself across my face. I slept so soundly that night.



Campfire at Thompson's Lake, September of 2025.

We all endure an amount of pain, of suffering. Some wrap the scars wholly around themselves and embody it. Some push the resulting dead tissue deep into the nooks and crannies of their subconscious. I realize that the path my friend had walked was one that brought him close to the edge. The baggage he carried was too heavy, too burdensome to allow him to continue. What he was doing that final night we shared a few breaths was telling me he was leaving. His end was close and he knew it. He needed me to take care of his cats, distribute his things, tell his sister, tell our friends. I have gotten so twisted up by all the could-haves and the should-haves but the fact remains that I didn't take action to save him. I did what he asked and nothing more.

Death is a process that everyone encounters. Attempts to understand its necessity, its unfolding and its impact have appeared in art, literature and religion across cultures for as long as humans have created. Accepting the inevitability of the end, the occasional shocking suddenness of its appearance or the permanence of its effect is never easy. The use of psilocybin-containing mushrooms during these times has proven to be a very powerfully effective tool.

“I need not describe the feelings of those whose dearest ties are rent by that most irreparable evil, the void that presents itself to the soul, and the despair that is exhibited on the countenance. It is so long before the mind can persuade itself



Author Avery and his friend Andrew take in a moment of bliss before Andrew's health deteriorated.

that she, whom we saw every day, and whose very existence appeared a part of our own, can have departed for ever—that the brightness of a beloved eye can have been extinguished, and the sound of a voice so familiar, and dear to the

ear can be hushed, never more to be heard.”—Mary Shelley, 1818, *Frankenstein*

The opinions and conclusions contained in this article express the viewpoint of the author and interview subjects and do not necessarily represent those of the North American Mycological Association. 🔒

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NAMA Eats

Unlock the Culinary
Secrets of Mushrooms
and Elevate Your
Gastronomic Experience

Announcing the Winning Entry of NAMA's 2026 Chopped-style Challenge

JONATHAN APPLEFIELD, CULINARY ARTS COMMITTEE

photos by Lorenzo Lo Piccolo

NAMA's *Chopped*-style Challenge 2026 brought together chefs from the Pacific West Coast, the Great Lakes, the Badlands, the Rockies and points in between. Contestants faced off with just a curated mystery basket of 6 required ingredients: mushrooms, seaweed, vinegar, cherries, a locally-foraged wild edible plant and horseradish. They were encouraged to add any additional ingredients and their own culinary imagination to arrive at a cohesive and delicious dish.

As [NAMA Culinary Arts Committee Chair Julie Schreiber](#) noted, "Balancing the earthy umami of wild mushrooms and seaweed with the fiery kick of horseradish and the sweet-tart pop of cherries is no easy feat!" With that mandate, entries started streaming in, including a dryad's saddle (*Cerioporus squamosus*) stuffed-grape leaf from Maurissa Dorn, vice president of the NAMA-affiliated [Wisconsin Mycological Society](#); Korean-inspired mushrooms flash-fried in a crispy rice flour veil by [Ian Umphrey](#), a chef and self-described Renaissance man from the Black Hills of South Dakota; a plate of meatballs in a toothsome



Polish sauce made from dried boletes by Oregon's most optimistically named mycologist, [Jennifer Burns Bright](#). The creativity on display was remarkable, proving that, as Chef Schreiber observed, "the forest floor and the kitchen are a match made in heaven."

What judges most admired was the chefs' sensibilities; how could one not love a recipe that begins, "Forage some newly emerged linden (*Tilia americana*)," an invitation to look at the canopy like a bear emerging into the lushness of spring," suggested [Jinjer Markley](#), a professional illustrator in Minnesota, in a recipe that arrived like a breeze off the lake, in her "Three Season Sushi." The dish, based on Tamagoyaki (a Japanese savory omelet), was deeply inflected with a Shinto aesthetic not only in title and presentation but through her visually scrumptious series of process photos.

Whether measured by geographic range, breadth of ingredients or variety of creative expression, NAMA's 2026 *Chopped*-style Challenge once again delivered an exquisite virtual repast. Check out your favorite dishes and follow the chefs at **#NAMACHopped2026** on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#).

WINNER

One entry from a city 20 miles north of Detroit really captivated the judges: Lorenzo Lo Piccolo's "[Morchella Vernula](#)," a spectacular morel-and-nettle terrine. Piccolo, an expert on the mushrooms of Michigan with over two decades of experience studying fungi,

submitted a dish that reads as much a recipe as a tone poem: "a mushroom mosaic wrapped in nori seaweed, filled with stinging nettle stuffed morels and boletes, served over nettle-and-butter sauces, decorated with cherry horseradish gel, horseradish snow and wildflowers." The judges were lulled by this vernal clarion



Plated "Morchella Vernula," by Lorenzo Lo Piccolo.



call—the vibrant hue and immediacy of stinging nettle, the grounding earthy flavor of morels and the chef’s impeccable aesthetics, with the finished dish resembling a watchwork.

Chef Schreiber appreciated “a recipe so clear it made our mouths water just reading it,” while for judge [Spike Mikulski](#), Executive Chef at *Pot au Feu* (Providence, Rhode Island’s famed French bistro), the recipe “took me back to when I studied Garde Manger in culinary school...the terrine and aspic utilizing the natural essence of the ingredients.”

[Dr. Gordon Walker](#), another judge, concurred: “Profoundly beautiful, not only in its presentation but also the sentiment behind it. I am bullish on mushroom terrines.” That’s mycological prognostication we can all stand behind.

Congratulations to Mr. Lo Piccolo, who will receive a NAMA Culinary Arts Committee Scholarship to attend NAMA Yoop.



Winning entrant Lorenzo Lo Piccolo.

Meet 2026 Chopped-style Challenge Winner Lorenzo Lo Piccolo

NAMA Culinary Arts Committee’s Jonathan Applefield had the pleasure of chatting with this year’s contest winner about his culinary philosophy.

Jon: The irony of this challenge being entirely virtual is that judges cannot taste the entries. Not that we wouldn’t love a NAMA TV Studio—Mushroom Stadium! So tell us, how did your dish taste?

Lorenzo: The pairing was good! When I first saw the ingredients, including the horseradish, I thought my

gosh, *this* is the whole challenge! How do I incorporate horseradish, which is so strong? I provided 2 choices. One is the snowflake horseradish for those who want to get the original punch done with early. Or, I mixed it with sour cherry powder, which tamed it. You can still taste it but it's not that burst that hits you.

Jon: Your winning recipe is time-consuming! What's your favorite way to make morels fast and furious?

Lorenzo: The famous way is with butter but I start with a little bit of their water. Once they get dry, I add butter. Then I put a little touch of Marsala wine and hit it with salt. You can add pepper if you want but just plain butter and Marsala wine at the end creates a little sauce you can use on appetizers, steak or chicken. I even put it on hot dogs!

HERE IS LORENZO'S SCRUMPTIOUS WINNING RECIPE:

Step 1: Morel Stuffing

Directions:

Collect, wash and trim nettles. Cut off the larger stems, keeping only younger shoots. Prepare a large bowl with ice-cold water. Boil a large pot of water. Add nettles and boil for 90 seconds. Drain nettles and place in the cold water for a few minutes. Strain nettles and squeeze out most of the water. Measure 1/4 cup of nettles for the stuffing. Reserve 3/4 cup for nettles sauce (step 3). On medium heat, sauté onion with butter until translucent. Add broth, combine well and turn off heat. Add yolk and breadcrumbs. Mix until thoroughly heated. Season and transfer to food processor with blanched nettles. Process until obtaining a thick smooth paste. Use in Step 2.

Ingredients:

- 12 cups blanched stinging nettle (yields over 1 cup)
- 1 small onion, chopped
- 1 tbsp. (15g) butter
- 2 tbsp. (50g) broth
- 1 egg yolk
- 1 to 2 tbsp. (10g) breadcrumbs (as needed to thicken paste)
- 2 tbsp. (15g) cream
- 1 tsp. bolete powder (5g) (optional)



Step 2: Mushroom Mosaic

Directions:

If using fresh mushrooms, clean/ wash them and go to next step. Otherwise, rehydrate mushrooms in warm water for 30 to 40 minutes. Drain mushrooms, preserving their water for the binding gel. Trim morel stems. Sauté mushrooms in a little bit of butter until slightly browned (about 7 minutes). Season and allow them to cool. Place nettle paste from Step 1 in a pastry bag. On a clean working surface, stuff some of the whole morels with the paste and set aside. Combine agar with a little broth and mushroom water to make a slurry. Add the rest of the liquid and mix well. Season and set aside.

Select a mold or container to hold the mushroom mosaic. Lightly brush the inside of the mold with oil. On a clean surface, measure and cut pieces of nori to fit the sides of the container. Lay the pieces of nori flat and lightly brush with water. Line the mold with the nori pieces. Layer the mold with sliced boletes and stuffed morels, ensuring there are no gaps. Fill in any gaps with the broth/agar mixture. Once filled, place one last sheet of nori on top to cover the mosaic. Place mold in fridge overnight



Ingredients:

- 9 mid-sized morels (some cut in half, some whole)
- 1 cup (40g) sliced boletes (I used bouillon boletes: *Lanmaoa (pallidorosea) rubissima*).
- 2 tsp. (5g) bolete powder (pulverized pieces of boletes)
- 1 tbsp. (15g) butter
- 2 sheets of nori seaweed
- 5 tbsp. (50g) broth (any type)
- 5 tbsp. (50g) mushroom water (or broth if not available)
- 1/8 tsp. (1.25 tsp.) guar gum

Step 3: Nettle Sauce

Process:

Melt butter in a saucepan and sweat the onion until translucent. Transfer cooked onion to mixer and add blanched nettles, broth, cream and garlic. Blend until sauce is very smooth. Cool sauce and place it inside a pouring bottle.

Ingredients:

- 3/4 cup (60g) blanched stinging nettle (from Step 1)
- 1/2 (120g) cup of broth (any type)
- 1 small garlic clove
- 1/2 small onion, chopped
- 1/2 cup (120g) cream
- 1 tbsp. (15g) butter

Step 4: White Butter Sauce

Ingredients:

- 6 tbsp. (50g) cold butter, cut into pieces
- 2 tbsp. (10g) chopped onions
- 2 tbsp. (24g) wine or water
- 2 tbsp. (24 g) white vinegar
- 3 tbsp. (22g) cream

Directions:

Combine onions and 1 tbsp. of butter. Cook over medium heat until translucent. Add water or wine and vinegar and cook until reduced by half. Add cream and cook for another 1 minute. Strain the sauce. Return liquid to pan and, over low heat, add the butter pieces slowly while whisking constantly. Sauce should have the consistency of liquid whipping cream. Cool sauce and place it inside a pouring bottle.



Step 5 - Horseradish-Cherry Gel

Ingredients:

- 1/3 cup (80g) of small, cubed horseradish
- 2 tbsp. (14g) tart cherry powder
- 2 tbsp. (24g) white vinegar
- ½ tsp. (2g) sugar
- 1 pinch of salt
- 1/8 tsp. (1.25g) agar gum

Directions:

Combine all the ingredients except agar gum. Process in a blender until smooth. Strain mixture and discard solids. To the liquid, add agar gum and mix well to form a gel that keeps its shape. Add a very small amount of agar if needed to thicken the gel further. Place the gel inside a pouring bottle.



Step 6: Plating

Directions:

Remove mushroom mosaic from refrigerator and unmold on a clean surface. Cut cross sections about 1 inch thick. Place mushroom mosaic on one side of the plate. To contain sauces, arrange two blanched pieces of nettle in front of the mosaic on both sides. Pour the green nettle sauce on one side of the plate, ensuring that it touches the mushroom mosaic on the sides. Likewise, pour the white butter sauce on the other side. Drop a few dots of olive oil on the nettle sauce. Dot the white sauce with the horseradish gel. Place some freshly grated horseradish snow in the middle. Decorate plate with seasonal flowers (purple violets and eastern redbud here). Enjoy!

Ingredients:

- mushroom mosaic
- nettle sauce
- butter sauce
- horseradish-Cherry gel
- 2 stinging nettle tips, blanched
- floral decorations



To my surprise, I did not find any mushroom mosaic recipes (like fish or meat mosaics) on the Internet. So, this was my personal challenge to create one.

I am calling this appetizer “*Morchella Vernula*” (translated as “spring mushroom”): a mushroom mosaic wrapped in nori seaweed, filled with stinging nettle stuffed morels and boletes, served over nettle and butter sauces, decorated with cherry horseradish gel, horseradish snow and wildflowers.

I was able to combine most of the main ingredients in at least two versions each to provide multiple flavor experiences in the same dish. *Additional photos are posted on Instagram @lorenzo.funginus.* 📌

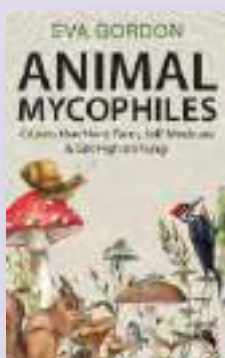


NAMA Reads

Explore Captivating
Literature Dedicated to
Mushrooms and Mycology.

Animal Mycophiles: Critters That Hunt, Farm, Self-Medicate and Get High on Fungi, by Eva Gordon

BOOK ENDORSEMENT BY ALISHA MILLICAN, ASSISTANT CURATOR OF FUNGI,
UNIVERSITY OF WEST ALABAMA HERBARIUM (UWAL), NAMA AT-LARGE TRUSTEE:



Green Writers Press, 2025
178 pages
ISBN: 979-8-9923988-4-7
\$19.95 [Please click here to order
Animal Mycophiles via Bookshop.org.](#)

Eva Gordon's *Animal Mycophiles* is a masterful exploration of the surprising and intricate relationships between animals and fungi. Gordon unveils how Funga and Fauna are intertwined; from the humble springtail to the majestic elephant, fungi play a pivotal role

on our planet. Her writing is both informative and enchanting, woven with a storyteller's flair. Her combined elements of ecology, folklore and conservation make this work a true celebration of nature's interconnectedness. Prepare to be amazed and delighted by the Fungal Kingdom beneath our feet. Whether you're a seasoned mycologist or a casual observer of the outdoors, *Animal Mycophiles* will leave you with a newfound appreciation for the unseen partnerships that shape our planet. 🍄



From Slugs to Psychedelics: An Interview with *Animal Mycophiles* Author Eva Gordon

BY JASON DE LA PEÑA

*Eva Gordon is a master naturalist and former science teacher who serves as Chair of the NAMA's Education Committee. She has dedicated her life to writing and speaking about fungal zoology and mycology for educators. Her new book, *Animal Mycophiles: Critters That Hunt, Farm, Self-Medicate and Get High on Fungi*, explores the fascinating world of animal-fungi relationships with a humorous approach that can be enjoyed by seasoned mycologists and beginners alike. Eva lives in the Pacific Northwest where she enjoys hiking, forest bathing and practicing Wing Chun. She is available to give talks on mycology and animal mycophiles for local mushroom clubs, libraries, Scout groups, schools and more! Please email evagordon@ravenauthor.com for inquiries.*

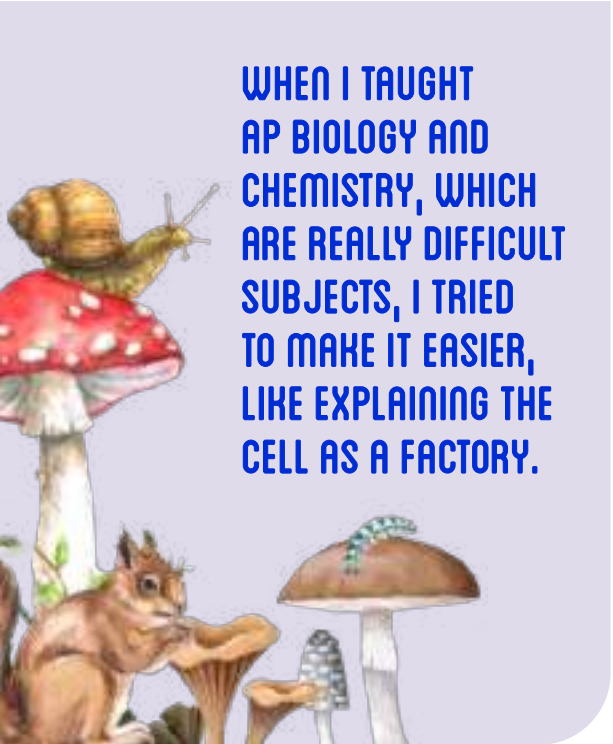


Jason de la Peña (JD): What inspired you to write a book on the topic of animal mycophiles, specifically?

Eva Gordon (EG): I was always a naturalist but I discovered mushrooms pretty late in the game. I was inspired by a quote from the late mycologist Gary Lincoff: “You should give up whatever job you have and just quit. Just stop now and devote the rest of your life to mushrooms.” So, that’s what I did! I wanted to combine it with my first passion, zoology. I started doing research, thinking there must be a book on animals and fungi—nope! There weren’t any. Beyond highly specialized scientific papers, there simply weren’t any comprehensive books out there. And so I decided to write the book myself!



JD: You come from a background in education and you work in the scientific community as well. Considering your experience, what kind of scientific depth can readers expect from this book? Is it accessible for general audiences?



WHEN I TAUGHT AP BIOLOGY AND CHEMISTRY, WHICH ARE REALLY DIFFICULT SUBJECTS, I TRIED TO MAKE IT EASIER, LIKE EXPLAINING THE CELL AS A FACTORY.

EG: I wanted to be scientifically accurate and I also wanted to make it accessible to people who don't know much about the subject. Even middle schoolers could maybe pick it up—but hopefully some of my PhD friends will also enjoy it. I think my experience as a teacher helped. When I taught AP Biology and Chemistry, which are really difficult subjects, I tried to make it easier, like explaining the cell as a factory. I use examples like that in the book because they help people retain information. The more the average person can understand fauna-funga relationships, the more they might want to help save our ecosystems.

JD: Mushroom hunting has been gaining popularity recently and *Animal Mycophiles* could be really interesting to that audience. What kind of insight or guidance does your book offer for observing animal-fungi relationships in readers' local environments?

EG: Whenever I take people out foraging, they always ask me if things are edible. I know a few of the edible mushrooms but my focus is mostly on ecology. I try to encourage people to keep in mind that they're not the only ones, that snails, insects, even birds are also foraging. It's okay to take some mushrooms for yourself but make sure to leave some for the critters to eat and to spread the spores. I think of the book *The Serviceberry* by Robin Wall Kimmerer, where she talks about the "gifts of nature" rather than "natural resources." If you say it's a gift from the forest, it implies that we should be grateful and give back. While you're observing these relationships, you should know that in order to forage for yourself, you must use caution and proper identification. When people first learn how to forage, they think "oh, a squirrel is eating this mushroom, it must be safe—but a lot of animals, including squirrels, can eat mushrooms that are toxic to humans."





JD: Your book addresses a wide variety of topics, from slugs that feed on fungi to reindeer that use psychedelics. What was the most challenging part of working all of these topics into one cohesive narrative?

EG: In the beginning it was really difficult. I would read a huge scientific paper about slugs, then I'd read another one about bonobos. I thought, there's no way I can cover every topic. I had to leave out thousands of them because there's just not enough time and space. I only scraped the surface of the insect world, for example.

JD: How did you choose which animals to cover in the book?

EG: I did a lot of research. I could have written a whole book just on mollusks, like snails and slugs. I mostly chose the animals that caught my interest and the focus was animals that farm and use them for self-medication. I ran across this paper by Gareth Patterson about elephants in South Africa; he mentions the artist's conk. I emailed him and he sent back some articles that had written. I didn't expect to talk about elephants; you know, who thinks of elephants and fungi?

JD: You explore a lot of uncharted territory, places where there hasn't been as much research or attention in the past. How did you navigate researching and writing these sections?

EG: There's anecdotal evidence that bighorn sheep eat lichens to get high but there's no research to back it up, just word of mouth. Some animal-fungi relationships are really well documented, like ants and termites that farm mushrooms, but there's very little about animals using medicinal mushrooms and psychedelics. That's a new field of research. I think the relationship between pollinators and fungi is really important too. People use fungicides to get rid



of diseases but it kills the mycelium; what does that do to pollinators that use mycelium to stay healthy? If the mycelium disappears, we don't even fully know what impact that will have on the animals that depend on it.

JD: What is one of the most interesting or obscure animal-fungi relationships that you discuss in your book?

EG: Certainly the elephants who eat the *Ganoderma applanatum*, or artist's conk. That was out of the blue. Another one is the flat bugs that eat mycelium. You assume that animals only eat the mushroom cap but if you go into the soil, some animals like flatbugs and nematodes consume mycelium.

JD: The tone of your book is very humorous and fun. Why did you decide on that approach?

EG: Well, that was my approach when I was a science teacher. Laughter makes people feel more relaxed, which makes them more open to learning. In the mycology community, we keep the "fun" in fungi! One of the first books I picked up was *Mushrooms Demystified* by David Arora, which contains some difficult material but he also makes a lot of jokes. As a teacher, if you don't have humor you're going to get killed in the classroom, especially with teenagers.

JD: Obviously, we're living in very ecologically perilous times. How do you address the implications of climate change and habitat loss for these ecosystems?



EG: It's all interconnected. If the mycorrhizal network is harmed, then it affects everything. Many fungi are very sensitive to the weather so if the weather becomes extreme, some mushrooms won't be able to grow or spread spores. If

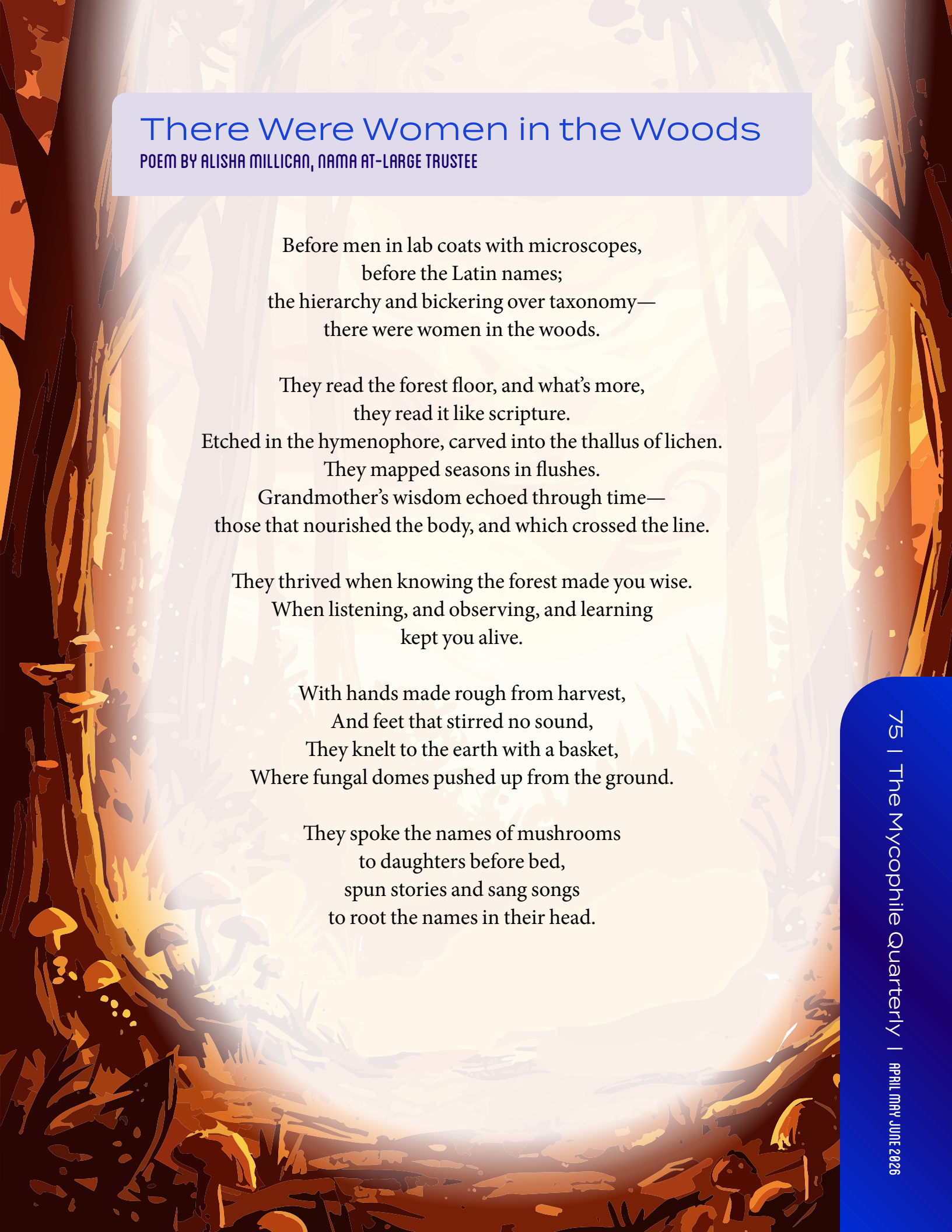
the mushrooms disappear, then the animals that eat them might disappear so might the trees that depend on them for nutrients. It's all tied together. There are some creatures whose main food source is mushrooms, such as rat kangaroos, which I talk about in the book. Many mushrooms depend on animals that spread spores, like flying squirrels. It's a really delicate balance.

JD: What's one "spore" of knowledge that you want readers to take away after reading *Animal Mycophiles*?

EG: I want readers to carry with them that the partnerships between animals and fungi are fundamental to the health of nearly every ecosystem on Earth. Fungi often quietly do their thing out of sight but not only are they important as a source of food and nutrients, they also do the important job of decomposing. Decomposers are vital to bringing nutrients back to the soil. The complex web of life can get torn apart by ecological threats like climate change and habitat loss. In many ways, understanding the relationships between fungi, animals and plants is an environmental responsibility for us. A lot of people don't realize that the starting point to helping out is getting involved in their own local ecosystem. 📌

Jason de la Peña is an aspiring literary editor and essay writer. He lives in southeast Ohio and spends his free time reading, hiking in the woods and spending time with his cats. 📌

MANY FUNGI ARE VERY SENSITIVE TO THE WEATHER SO IF THE WEATHER BECOMES EXTREME, SOME MUSHROOMS WON'T BE ABLE TO GROW OR SPREAD SPORES. IF THE MUSHROOMS DISAPPEAR, THEN THE ANIMALS THAT EAT THEM MIGHT DISAPPEAR. SO MIGHT THE TREES THAT DEPEND ON THEM FOR NUTRIENTS. IT'S ALL TIED TOGETHER.



There Were Women in the Woods

POEM BY ALISHA MILLICAN, NAMA AT-LARGE TRUSTEE

Before men in lab coats with microscopes,
before the Latin names;
the hierarchy and bickering over taxonomy—
there were women in the woods.

They read the forest floor, and what's more,
they read it like scripture.
Etched in the hymenophore, carved into the thallus of lichen.
They mapped seasons in flushes.
Grandmother's wisdom echoed through time—
those that nourished the body, and which crossed the line.

They thrived when knowing the forest made you wise.
When listening, and observing, and learning
kept you alive.

With hands made rough from harvest,
And feet that stirred no sound,
They knelt to the earth with a basket,
Where fungal domes pushed up from the ground.

They spoke the names of mushrooms
to daughters before bed,
spun stories and sang songs
to root the names in their head.



And the field guides came later.
And textbooks hadn't yet come to pass
But the knowledge?
Trickled down through time and lineage,
a matriarchal whisper—THAT came from her.

Through hands that gathered.
through songs that described,
through mouths that warned.
through stories that survived,
even when she did not.

This is her legacy.
Buried like mycelium—
intended as a grave, but veritably planted; unable to be staved.

Quiet.
Spreading.
Enduring. 🍄



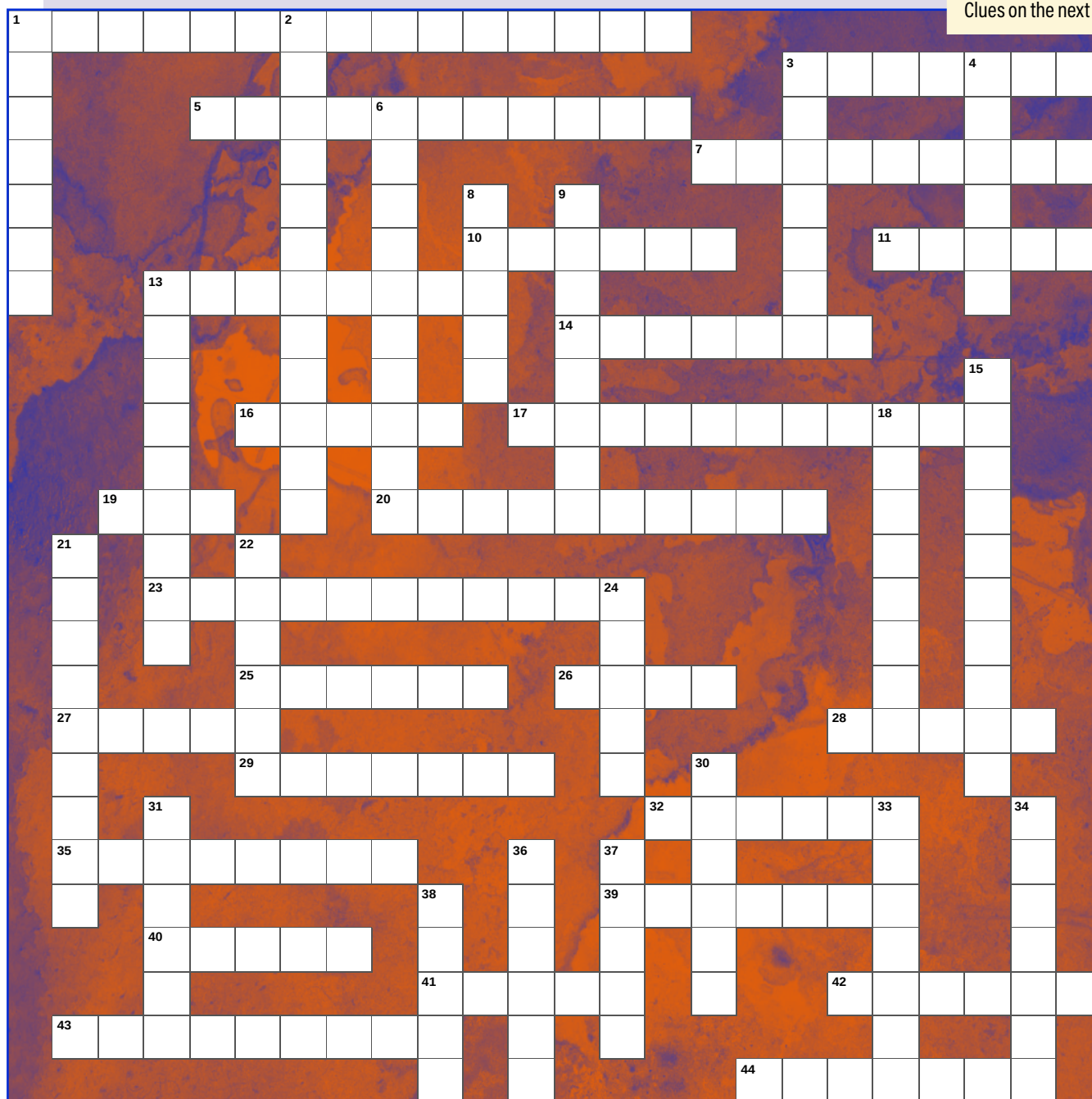
NAMA

Crossword

BRUCH REED, COO/MQ ED., WITH LAYOUT ARTIST CHRIS ROSS

All the answers can be found
in this MQ edition!

Clues on the next page



April May June Crossword

BRUCH REED, NAMA COO/MQ ED., WITH LAYOUT ARTIST CHRIS ROSS

As always, the answer to every clue can be found through careful reading of this MQ.

Across

- 1** famous UP geological feature
- 3** addicting chips or NAMA Yoop keynoter
- 5** pungent *Chopped*-style Challenge choice
- 7** title NOT a prerequisite for NAMA leadership
- 10** Eva Gordon's favorite *Mycophiles*
- 11** polypore portraitist
- 13** NHMS' favorite forum
- 14** Biblical song of or wise COMA entity
- 16** the demystifier
- 17** *Fagus*-felling roundworm genus
- 19** mycological Luther
- 20** DNAMA's pursuit
- 23** MSA speaks up for fungal ____
- 25** *Urtica*, colloquially
- 26** COMA shares these kinds of mushroom facts
- 27** Dr. Walker is this kind of diver
- 28** fathered Tavis, not *Twin Peaks*
- 29** *Frankenstein's* author
- 32** describes Michigan's northern forests
- 35** Happy winner of NAMA Yoop Logo Contest
- 39** among Spike's top ten edibles
- 40** this many whistle blasts for distress
- 41** first in forest
- 42** Similkameen Valley fungal quarry
- 43** puts the P in "Yoop"
- 44** *Agaricus andrewii*, probably, colloquially

Down

- 1** Stempel's pup
- 2** Kimmerer's titular fruit
- 3** woodwind-monikker'd chef
- 4** she "started it all" in New Hampshire
- 6** Frost's bolete's current genus
- 8** NYMS beloved past president
- 9** Veerabahu's band
- 12** this Dr. treats the dying
- 13** Yooperlites thrillingly
- 15** FDA-acknowledged breakthrough therapy
- 18** masterful Mexican mushroom huntress
- 21** new butter bolete species epithet
- 22** "Bugs with Beth" who?
- 24** Lynch's mycohero
- 30** Weinstein's favorite Isle
- 31** Old Aqueduct with its own state park
- 33** Lynch's favorite living mycologist
- 34** NHMS signature mushroom gatherings
- 36** pioneer ethnomycologist
- 37** neither flora nor funga
- 38** Old English for "knowing"

January February March Crossword Answers

BRUCH REED, NAMA COO/MQ ED., WITH LAYOUT ARTIST CHRIS ROSS

Across

- 1** *Mycena luxaeterna* is noticeably—**bioluminescent**
- 6** Laboulbeniales, for short—**labouls**
- 8** juvenile eels—**elvers**
- 11** language of the Sierra Juarez—**Zapotec**
- 14** Sabina's state—**Oaxaca**
- 15** Upper Peninsula residents, colloquially—**Yoopers**
- 16** Gary's beloved spouse—**Irene**
- 19** Pollack says they love slime molds—**springtails**
- 20** Claudine's granddaughter—**Sabine**
- 23** Texas star mushroom genus—**Chorioactis**
- 26** inward-phallused avian—**cassowary**
- 27** Dr. Theresa A. Kenney forages for—**wellness**
- 29** Voros' poem genus—**Pleurocybella**
- 31** only they can create new awareness—**outliers**
- 32** pigment of Maya Han's MQ cover art—**Psilocybe**
- 36** DeLong-Duhon's "firewheel flower" genus—**Gaillardia**
- 38** sour *Chopped*-style Challenge ingredient—**vinegar**
- 39** makes up fungal cell walls—**chitin**
- 40** he says shaved finishing salt is essential—**Gilbert**
- 41** YVMS' woods are alive with—**mystery**
- 43** NAMA-affiliated Club Spotlight valley—**Yakima**
- 45** mycophagists have lowered risks of—**depression**
- 46** 1st U.S. state to declare an official mushroom—**Minnesota**
- 47** betrayed Sabina—**Wasson**

Down

- 2** Indianapolis Zoo Conservation Challenge—**Uproar**
- 3** Annual Foray Logo Contest prize—**scholarship**
- 4** director of *María Sabina, mujer espíritu*—**Echevarría**
- 5** Virginia's toxic mushrooms project—**Claudius**
- 7** he shares winecap recipes—**Applefield**
- 9** Sabina's evening gatherings—**veladas**
- 10** Kaishian finds nature abounding in—**queerness**
- 12** the Voucher Collection Project seeks—**assistants**
- 13** Sauer's printing process—**cyanotype**
- 17** mycologists in Quebec—**mycologues**
- 18** Malaysian-born Norwegian social anthropologist—**Woon**
- 21** *The Lives of Fungi* author—**Bunyard**
- 22** Stephen of MycotaLab—**Russell**
- 24** _____ the Last Similkameen Valley Foray & Feast tickets!—**Snag**
- 25** *Cortinarius* toxin—**orellanine**
- 27** prosecuted for "gross indecency"—**Wilde**
- 28** genus of Michaud's recipes—**Stropharia**
- 30** Dr. Lopez Garcia's first name—**Alexanders**
- 33** formerly The Birchmont—**Birchy**
- 34** singeing reaction that boosts flavor—**Maillard**
- 35** cooperative name of Ireri Monter's business—**Symbiosis**
- 37** NAMA_MX26 returns to—**Ixtlán**
- 39** 1893 World's Fair toddlin' town—**Chicago**
- 42** the season upon us - **spring**
- 44** Layton's home state—**Iowa**