

MushRumors

The Newsletter of the Northwest Mushroomers Association

Volume 26, Issue 1

February 2015

Blossoms on the Trees, Mushrooms on the Table

This balmy winter has us all experiencing spring fever (and perhaps fretting about the lack of snowpack in the mountains). The spring mushroom season will soon be upon us; morels have already been found in Oregon, and soon enough they'll be poking up through the duff in our neck of the woods! Mark your calendars for some fungal fun this spring; the Survivors Banquet takes place March 21, and Morel Madness is coming up in May. Morel Madness is a great opportunity to enjoy food, friends, and fungi (hopefully some of which will be morels) in a beautiful location. Stay tuned for further details. Member meetings will be taking place on April 9, May 14, and June 11, 7-9 p.m. at the Bellingham Public Library. The April 9 meeting will feature a presentation by Fred Rhoades entitled "Mushroom Photography: How I Do It." Dr. Rhoades will shed some light on the equipment and methods he uses to take normal-distance, macro and stereo photographs of mushrooms and other cryptogams. With this strange winter weather, the upcoming season promises to be full of surprises. Happy hunting!

Photo by Jack Waytz



A smorgasbord of culinary delights filled plates and bellies at the 2010 Survivors Banquet.

Survivors Banquet Promises Plentiful Food, Fun, and Fungi

By Jack Waytz

Next date to make sure is on your calendar will be the annual Survivors Banquet, taking place at the Bellingham Unitarian Fellowship at 1207 Ellsworth Street on Saturday March 21 at 5:00 p.m. This time will be for tall tales, a great potluck (mushroom recipes!), and fun! We will elect and sustain the Board at this time. We will also have our traditional mushroom-themed raffle, so bring some fungal curios to add to the mix! This is a great way to kick off the spring mushroom season, get great information from the club's more knowledgeable members, and show off your culinary skills. Hope to see everyone there!

Volunteers Sought for Northwest Mushroomers Board Positions

By Jack Waytz

Greetings, Northwest Mushroomers! There are a number of key positions on the organization's Board of Directors up for election this year, so we're looking for some motivated volunteers. The positions are: vice president, treasurer, and if anyone were to be interested, Chuck Nafziger would be willing to cede the position of club president. Additionally, we need someone to act as foray chair, and three trustees. The foray chair will serve as the coordinator for the club's outings. He or she will ensure that a host and at least one identifier are present for all club outings. The trustees can have various functions, but primarily they are tasked with voting on pertinent issues. This is an excellent opportunity to become more involved in the workings of our club and provide for our future. The position of treasurer requires a working knowledge of accounting, though not necessarily formal training. Please contact me via e-mail at gandalf5926@comcast.net if you are interested in any of the aforementioned positions.

Needle Rock

By Randy Marchand

This is the second in a series of stories by Randy Marchand, a Canadian commercial mushroom picker with over four decades of experience hunting edible mushrooms in the Canadian wilds.

The rev of the ATV's motor had my heart racing as I gave the throttle a little pull. I had just done the last check of the gear that I wanted with me and, being satisfied, I signaled my friends to go. We gunned our engines and spun out of the driveway, spewing gravel and dust. We headed through the back streets of Pelly Crossing towards the Pelly River and a part of town that had been off limits for the past month. Our three ATVs rambled from road to ditch, staying to the grass where possible to keep down the dust.

My two traveling companions were both young men from Pelly who had grown up in this northern Yukon First Nation Community. Pelly Crossing first appears to be a sleepy river crossing with just a few buildings including a welcome gas station, bar, and general store. Then you notice the RCMP office, a ramshackle order of housing, and a stylish Band Office. For the first few weeks in Pelly I found myself saying the place was dead, but as time went on I realized that the Band Office was the hub of the community and at times was a busy place.

I quickly realized that being third in a line of speeding ATVs was not the best place to be. I found that the best thing to do was to hang back. The only problem in this was that I did not know the trail that we were on. I was afraid that if I lost sight of my friends I might make a wrong turn. I had extra fuel and water in addition to my normal survival gear that I carry with me when in the wilds of the Yukon, so I felt I could take the chance of hanging back behind the dust clouds. I found that I could hang back and follow the dust but enjoy the trip into the northern wildlands.

We shot past the last few houses and followed what appeared to be a cat trail (winter road) that followed the Pelly River northwards. The trail here was very dry and dusty along the south bank of the river so I slowed down and let my two new friends race ahead as I tried to rub the dirt and dust from my eyes. The dust hung in the air and floated outwards to blur my view and cover the vegetation close to the trail. I could tell there had been no travel down this trail for some time, because as I passed over a wet boggy low draw the only tracks were from my two companions.

Photo by Randy Marchand



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The Northwest Mushroomers Association meets on the second Thursday of the months April, May, and June and September, October, and November, from 7 - 9 pm.

Meeting location is the Bellingham Public Library. We will inform you

in advance of any changes of venue.

Membership dues are \$15 for individuals/families and \$10 for students. Please make checks payable to NMA and send to: membership, at the mailing address above.

Field trips are scheduled for the Saturday after each meeting.

MushRumors is published on (approximately) 3/7, 6/7, 8/31, 10/25, and 12/7.

Club members are encouraged to submit stories, photos, recipes, poetry, and artwork related to their own mushroom hunting experiences. Submissions should be made 7-10 days prior to publication.

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Photo by Randy Marchand



I gunned my new big 350 Honda 4x4 ATV through a deep wet black bog and the mud and water exploded from my path. At this point the trail had started to become overgrown with willows about three to four feet high. There was a worn path through them about six feet wide, and in the wet places the path was deeply rutted and worn.

[Editor's note: Regarding the author's comment, "I gunned my new big 350 Honda 4x4 ATV through a deep wet black bog and the mud and water exploded from my path," the bog to which he refers is actually a winter road that has been carved into the wilderness by a large excavator. This road, and others like it, serve as an access point into areas where there are no

roads, as is the character of most of the Yukon, an incomprehensibly vast expanse of true wilderness. As the spring thaw progresses north, they turn into 'bogs', which must be driven through to gain access into the areas where mushrooms are found. The author would like to make it clear that he and his crew are cognizant and respectful of the environment in which they collect.]

There was no dust in these wetter places; the trees of the forest changed from poplar to black spruce and the forest floor became covered with moss as the ground became wetter. As I was to later learn, these moss-covered areas usually meant that there was permafrost just under the moss. This permafrost slowly melts and keeps the surrounding area wet and alive! (Note: This is a good place to cool off if you ever get over-heated in the hot Yukon summer sun.)

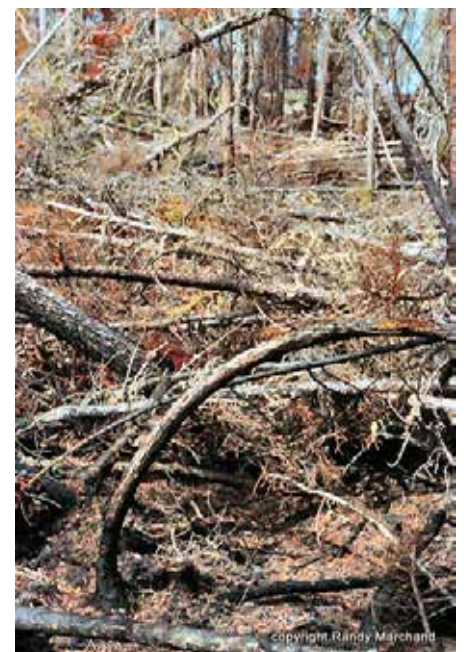
I opened my ATV up and surged ahead and felt the wind rifle through my hair and clothes. I went through the gears and found the top end of this powerful ATV. I really had to hold on as I bounced over and around the uneven path. Sliding around a corner I came upon my friends who were waiting for me, smiling and wiping the dust from their eyes. We did a quick check of the machines and realized that we had already gone 12 kilometers. It takes our full concentration to keep the ATVs moving at these speeds and the distance quickly passes. We still had about 60 kilometers to go to get to our destination, and once there we had to scout an area of burnt forest that had been devastated by fire the year before. I hoped that we would find morel mushrooms, load our baskets and return later in the day.

It was now about six-thirty a.m., but I was not worried about time as at this time of the year the sun will still be in our faces at 1:30 in the morning. It will not really get dark, but rather a welcomed dusk will arrive at about 2:30 a.m. This dusk will be when the smart mushroom pickers will be stopping to have their dinner. The cool end of the long hot days of northern summer is soaked up as you lie inert upon the ground and let your body rejuvenate. You feel your body temperature fall back to a more comfortable level.

We had stopped on a high bank of the Pelly River that would be our last view of the river. We looked north up the river to Needle Rock Canyon that is adorned with one of those freaks of nature, a needle-like rock jutting from the middle of the river and pointing its finger skyward for a good 30-40 feet. It appeared that high but the bank here was a muddy steep slope that was an easy 400 feet down to the river. The canyon with the needle rock was a good kilometer farther on. That was the closest I wanted to get to that rock after I took just one look at the steep muddy bank.

We were soon on our way again and I stayed in the rear of the convoy. This was not too bad as we made our way around the north side of Prospector mountain. The terrain was up and down with some challenging climbs. The trail was muddy and steep, but at least there was no dust! However, I did find out that if you do not desire a mud pack for your face, it's best to hang back a little. Although it is fun to see the ATVs in front of you work their way through some of the bogs and up some of the steep hills I suggest caution as

Photo by Randy Marchand



wet brakes do not stop as fast as you may need.

As soon as we had passed Prospector Mountain there was a small river to our right flowing in the same general direction that we had to go. This river was as was the Pelly, eroded into the landscape leaving steep muddy banks.

We soon came to a spot where the river crossed our path so a bridge of sorts had been made of trees, logs, planks plywood, etcetera. It was crisscrossing the river, with rather sharp corners and narrow track. The deck of the bridge was haphazard at best, but this was the only way to cross as the water was dark, cold and deep. My two companions were already across and were watching me with big smiles as I came roaring up to the bridge with a doubtful look on my face. Seeing that my friends had made it, I thought, so could I. Gearing down to a stop I put the atv into low range.

Giving the throttle a squeeze I gunned the atv so that it jumped up onto the slippery logs that started my way across the river. I knew that I just had to have a steady hand on the fuel and a closer hand on the brakes. The water was dark and running swiftly under the decking occasionally splashing up onto the deck. I tried not to concentrate on the water but rather what I had to do next. I made it to the first sharp corner, Here I lifted up on the handle bars and bounce the front end over and gave the throttle a light squeeze just the right amount of gas, suddenly the front end was heading in the correct direction. I soon made it across without mishap but my heart was beating quickly.

Photo by Randy Marchand



We shut the ATVs off to have a lunch as we now had access to running water. After repeated rinsing it seemed like I would never get all the grit and dust out of my eyes. I saw that I would soon have much more dust to tend with as a long dry flat land and pine tree forest lay before us. The road was sandy and we would be able to get top speed from our machines on the next part of our journey. We took our time over lunch as we knew the temperature would soon begin to rise as the sun was climbing overhead. We all went over our ATVs before we left the river to tackle the pine flats. We topped up the fuel and checked to make sure our luggage was strapped on tight, as we each had personal gear of five five-kiloliter mushroom baskets with lids, extra fuel, water and food, plastic tarps, jacket and rain coat, and a small chain saw with its own fuel. All this was mostly up front, but I bungeed the clothes and tarps down behind me on the racks.

My friends had already begun but I waited for the dust to settle down a bit before I started my mad dash through the flats. I raced up through the gears and was soon maxed out and wishing for a 440; my hair was flying straight out behind me like Guy Laflore on a breakaway, and I felt like a strange cross between the man from Snowy River and Easy Rider. Time and kilometers quickly passed by. This enchanted forest had a strange power to make any that passed within its realm travel as fast as they could, madly and with reckless abandon through to its border. It was a forest of only pine trees that were naturally spaced, with little to no undergrowth, only reindeer moss and Labrador tea. I thought to myself, this could be a possible site for

Photo by Randy Marchand



Photo by Randy Marchand



chanterelle or pine mushrooms in the fall as the pine trees were very mature. There must have been a fire here about one to two hundred years before, by the look of the forest.

My friends and I played cat and mouse for the next 20 kilometers and soon hit the first evidence of the fire. Partially burned ground ran up to the right side of the road; there were morel mushrooms clearly visible, and already growing! The sound of our ATVs' engines had barely ceased and quiet surrounded us, but we hardly noticed as we were already busy filling up our first baskets of morels. My friends were very excited; they were into their first morel mushroom pick and had the fever... Bad!

Soon we were ready to start on our way home with our mushrooms safely bungee corded onto the ATV (Note: It is very important to put some moss, ferns, or clothes in each basket to tightly pack the mushrooms in. This will to stop them from bouncing around. If you do not do this you will have mushroom crumbs when you get back!)

I was determined to be first to leave on the return trip so with much gusto I sped off, with a quick look back to make sure my friends were attempting to follow me. They were trying to hurry up and leave, but were a few minutes behind me. Without looking back anymore, I kept my machine full out through the pine flats. It was nice to be out in front and not chewing dust. I stopped at the river and bridge to wait for my friends. After about fifteen minutes they had not arrived so I decided to be off again to ensure that I would still be out in front. This part of the trip is slower going but I was pushing a little too fast when I didn't make it into the mud trail through the willows. Much to my surprise, I found that the willow tree shrubs did not bend all the way down if I kept the throttle at full power. I was "flying high".

I beat my friends back to Pelly by over one hour. They couldn't figure how I beat them so by so much and were after me to explain. At first I told them that they would figure it out when they had a little more experience under their belts. I let them wonder for a few days, but finally told them.

I had only about 45 pounds of premium blonde fire morels. We could have stayed and picked more but we were just scouting out the fire. We never did return even though there were lots of morels there. We were just too busy.

Once back at Minto I found pickers lined up at the buying station demanding to sell their wares. I started right in and worked for the next 27 hours. Before I dropped, I was up for 49 hours. I got about three and a half hours' sleep before being woken up for more mushroom madness. I did get to have a nightmare about killer mushrooms and giant ATVs.

Photo by Randy Marchand



Mushroom of the Month: *Hemimycena tortuosa* (Orton) Redhead

By Buck McAdoo

There had been a freeze for about five days followed by a day of warm rain, but January 4th was simply gray. It seemed like the right day to search for the Christmas *Tubaria* out at Clark's Point. This elusive *Tubaria* had dark red caps, pinkish-violet gills, and cinnamon colored spores. It only fruited around the stumps of giant, fallen madrone trees in the dead of winter, and Clark's Point had plenty of those. As most of us know, there has been a coastal blight on madrones, thought to be a fungal pathogen abetted by global warming. The co-owner of Clark's Point, Bill Wright, is a keen naturalist, and he welcomed us out there for a look around. It is a spectacular piece of land that juts out from the north end of Chuckanut Bay.

Photo by Fred Rhoades



Hemimycena tortuosa under the dissecting scope.

I was joined in Fairhaven by Jairul Rahaman and Dr. Dick Morrison and out we went. We planned on scooping up Fred Rhoades en route, but there was no car in his driveway.

Bill met us at his front door. We were surrounded by towering firs and hemlocks with alder and madrone forming the deciduous counterparts. We had barely stepped off his porch when a bird with an enormous wingspan soared by above the canopy.

“Golden eagle,” identified Bill, “It lives here.”

We headed south along a ridge on a meandering trail among boulders. It was a tragic yet hauntingly beautiful sight. The great whitened trunks of dead madrones crisscrossed helter-skelter below us like ivory dinosaur bones and bleached elk antlers on the dark green moss. We would need to split up to cover it all. Either Dick or Jairul found a pair of diminutive *Cystodermas*, and the hunt was on.

About ten minutes later I ran into a dead raccoon on a rock ledge.

“Is it missing its tail and one hind leg?” inquired Bill. It sure was. The wound had healed up completely. Bill figured the animal couldn’t compete for food in the winter and had expected to see the corpse at some point. We speculated that it had been attacked by the golden eagle or a coyote.

Jairul soon found a solitary *Gymnopilus penetrans* and I was starting to feel relatively useless, having only found the dead raccoon. I turned around at the end of the point and started back up the eastern side. About a hundred feet up the eastern ridge I ran into a madrone branch with a small, moist depression in it. In the center of this depression sat a colony of a diminutive mycenoid species I hadn’t seen before. I took three out-of-focus shots before handing the collection to Dick.

Back at the office I turned to Dr. Ian Gibson’s superb key on the northwestern small white *Mycenas*. After three steps a microscope was called for in order to proceed further. I squash mounted a stem on a slide and soon had a good view of the stipitipellis. A bit of cruising around the periphery of the stem tissues yielded up an astonishing sight—corkscrew-shaped caulocystidia jutting out from the stipitipellis at right angles. I had found *Hemimycena tortuosa*. There were three of these cystidia, all with rounded heads or ‘capitate’ in the vernacular.

The species turned out to be widespread but rare. Although common in southern England, it has showed up rarely in France, Australia, New Zealand, Hawaii, and British Columbia. Dr. Heino Lepp found it on eucalyptus debris in a garden in Canberra in 2001. Desjardin and Hemmes found it on sugi pine on Kaua’i. Dr. Robert Gilbertson had also found a collection on Hawaii much earlier. Dr. Scott Redhead reported a collection from Shannon Falls south of Squamish in British Columbia, and both he and the Ceskas have found it on Vancouver Island.

We handed the collection over to Fred for verification.

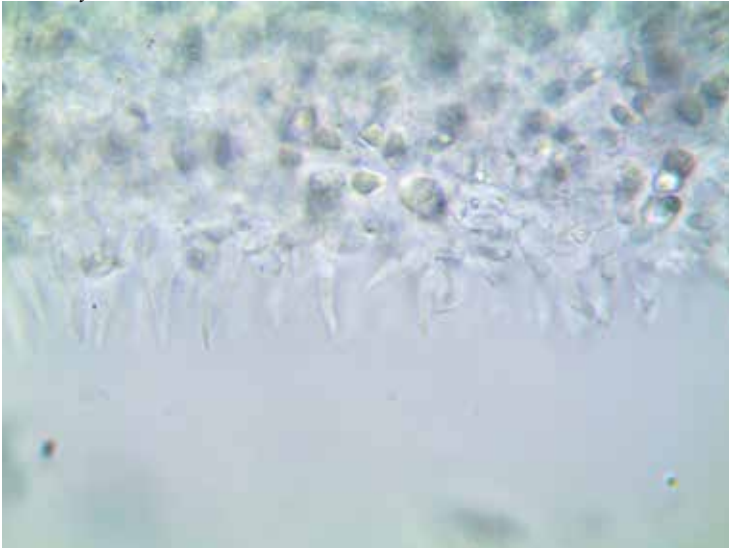
Caps of *Hemimycena tortuosa* are 1-8 mm wide, convex to plane becoming depressed or subumbonate in age. They are pure white, minutely powdery, but slightly pellucid-striate when wet. The common name, the Dewdrop Bonnet, refers to its

Photo by Dick Morrison



Hemimycena tortuosa growing on a madrone branch.

Photo by Fred Rhoades



Short, cylindrical cheilocystidia.

Photo by Fred Rhoades



Corkscrew-shaped caulocystidia at 1000x magnification.

The species is a treat to look at microscopically. The nearly unique corkscrew pileocystidia and caulocystidia jump right at you. They measure 8 microns thick and up to 70 microns long. Basidia can be 2-4 spored. The cheilocystidia are abundant, fusiform to lageniform in shape with acute apices. There is also a second form of cheilocystidia of an obtusely cylindrical shape and shorter in length. The pileipellis and gill trama are of interwoven hyphae, and clamps are present. The spores are fusiform-lanceolate and measure 7-11 x 2.3-3.5 microns.

As for look-alikes, there are numerous tiny white mycenoid species, but according to the literature, *Hemimycena cephalotricha* is the most similar. It has the same corkscrew pileocystidia, but has shorter and wider spores and fruits on oak leaves in Europe.

Hemimycena tortuosa is extremely rare in Scandinavia, having been found only once in Norway. It has been found in Washington State before, near Clinton on south Whidbey Island. Our collection may or may not be the second find for the state.

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propensity to hold drops of dew on both cap and stipe. The cap margins can become wavy and lobed in age. Gills are adnate to adnexed or even free, as a few were in this collection. They are white, distant, occasionally forking or anastomizing. The gill edges are minutely floccose under a hand lens. The stems are central or eccentric and measure less than half a millimeter thick and up to 25 mm long. They are entirely pubescent under a hand lens. They are white with white hairy bases or loose mycelial growths. Spores are white and inamyloid. Odor and taste are mild.

The Dewdrop Bonnet fruits on a vast variety of woody debris. Literature reports it on alder, fir, elder, larch, willow, hornbeam, beech, birch, ash, eucalyptus, pine, oak, spruce, and yew. The collection here might be the first report on madrone.



Corkscrew-shaped caulocystidia at 400x magnification.

Garlic Prawns With Red Peppers and Lobster Mushrooms

Ingredients:

- 1 oz. dried lobster mushrooms (I always use more)
- 3 large red bell peppers
- 3 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- 1 or 2 (depending on the spice you like) small red jalapeno chili peppers, finely chopped
- 24 medium sized tiger prawns, peeled and de-veined
- 2 tablespoons fresh Italian parsley, minced

Soak mushrooms in enough warm water to cover for about 25 minutes. Drain mushrooms through paper towel or coffee filter.

Reserve essence. Cut large pieces of mushroom into thin slices

Char peppers over gas flame or in broiler until blackened. Transfer to a paper bag, close and let stand for about 10 minutes.

Peel, seed and slice peppers into thin strips (you can also use good quality roasted red peppers available at most specialty stores, including the Food Coop). Set aside.

Place 2 tablespoons of the olive oil in a skillet over medium-high heat. Add the mushrooms and saute for about 2 - 4 minutes.

Add the roasted red peppers. Season with salt and pepper. Remove from skillet and set aside.

Place the remaining tablespoon of olive oil in the skillet over medium-high heat. Add garlic and chili peppers. Saute for about 2 minutes, slowly adding in the reserve liquid from the mushrooms. Add prawns and saute for about 3 minutes each side. Mix in parsley.

Arrange red peppers and mushrooms on plates and top with the prawn and garlic-chili pepper mixture. Serve with favorite rice.

Photo by David Arora



Abundant lobster mushrooms, perfect for pairing with peppers and prawns!

2014 Fall Mushroom Season: 100 Days of King Boletes

By Jack Waytz

The 2014 fall mushroom season came on suddenly in early September, and then endured and flourished through mid-November. After a lengthy period of dry, warm summer weather, a profound shift in the jet stream brought in storm after storm and temperate humid air to the entire area. It was these conditions which led up to our fall exhibit, and yielded more than 400 species of fungi to grace our display tables, nearly 100 more than our previous largest diversity.

Within the already surprisingly robust fruitings of many desired mushrooms, there were certain mushrooms which experienced historic fruiting cycles, even when measured against the superlative. The biggest

beneficiaries of the nearly ideal weather conditions were lobster mushrooms, which enjoyed a prolific growing season which lasted fully four months. I found them in much larger numbers than usual in areas that I was accustomed to finding them, and found them in numbers where I had never before encountered them. *Hericiums* were found in an uncommon amount. This group of mushrooms are a real treat to find in average seasons, and although they can attain a very large stature, are simply never very plentiful. This past fall, however, it seemed that the end of every hemlock snag was bedecked with these snow white beautiful mushrooms, with all three species known from our area, *H. abietis*, *H. coralloides*, and *H. erinaceus*, well represented everywhere in the alpine. But perhaps most remarkable of all were the king boletes.

Generally, I have observed that years following a season much more prolific than normal for fruiting bodies for a specific mushroom such as *Boletus edulis* are less than average to paltry. This year was vastly divergent from my past observations. The fall of 2013 (and in fact late summer as well) was epic for king boletes, and this past season was just as good, and even better late into the season. Curiously, in the historic fall mushroom season of 2013, along with magnificent fruitings of king boletes, *Boletus mirabilis* was found in equally fantastic quantities all throughout our forests. This year, I ran across a total of less than ten.

Ironically, I'd had a conversation in the closing days of July with Fred Rhoades, and concluded with trepidation that this year was starting to look a lot like 2012—far too dry. I told Fred that I thought that there was not much hope for a good fall mushroom season, especially for the fleshy pored fungi of the Boletaceae. I would later be delighted to have been quite mistaken. It wasn't but a few days later that we got our first good

Photo by Jack Waytz



The first kings of 2014.

Photo by Jack Waytz



Lobster mushrooms fruited plentifully in 2014.

dousing, and then Fred, Buck, and I took the first sojourn into the high country on the southwest face of Mt. Baker to take a peek. We were not disappointed. Upon entering the cool, damp woods a myriad of *Russulas* came immediately into view, scattered gypsy mushrooms, and *Turbinellus floccosus* were also revealing themselves. It wasn't long before I discovered a few mature king boletes, which had already been well munched upon by the worms, which seem to enjoy them as much as I do. The season was officially underway. Some more careful scrutiny resulted in several beautiful buttons

Photo by Jack Waytz



Found with the two buttons below, grew in 36 hours!

king boletes in the alpine. These are actually *Boletus edulis* var. *grandedulis*, a particularly large and flavorful bolete. I have not observed multiple fruitings in previous seasons, but this year there were four distinct fruitings between October 10th and November 14th. The conditions were apparently perfectly suited for the mushrooms' liking, as I observed the emergence of fruiting bodies that weighed in at between five and seven pounds develop in only 36–48 hours! After the first fruiting, the flies that lay their eggs at the base of the boletes were cycled out, and all the rest of them were completely worm-free. The beautiful buttons pictured here were the last kings of the fall of 2015. The next morning it was in the mid-20s, and the season was spent.

and a few beautiful young mature specimens which the worms had not yet had the chance to turn into a gourmet meal. A very nice result indeed for so early in the season.

Naturally, the success infected me with insatiable desire to check all of my bolete spots in the next several days. I discovered the early part of the seasonal *Boletus edulis* fruiting everywhere that I was able to put myself onto alpine trails. Generally, once the area-wide fruitings begin to fire, they will keep going as long as conditions are favorable, usually coming to an end with the first hard freezes or substantial snowfalls. In my experience, the average season seems to last about four to five weeks while the ideal conditions persist. This year, there were boletes aplenty for fully ten weeks, lasting until well into November on Mt. Baker, as Vince and Migo Biciunas discovered on a sunny November day on one of our favorite trails. They brought down several pounds of beautiful kings, reprising the success that we had had on the same trail in November eight years before.

The alpine is only one habitat known to support the king bolete in our area, and in the past couple of seasons, I have been fortunate to stumble upon some spots at sea level. The length and strength of the fruiting season in these locales paralleled the robust activity of the

Photo by Jack Waytz



The last kings of 2014, as tasty as they look!