

Mushroom Mayhem at Alta Lake: May 20–22, 2022

photographs and text by Martha Dyck

Our campout east of the mountains has passed, but great memories linger. Morels were found, as well as many other fungi, friends were made, good stories were told, and savory food enjoyed. Despite cold rain and occasional blustery wind the experience was dubbed a success by all who attended.

The evening most everyone arrived at Alta Lake State Park, we gathered by the fire to talk about our expectations for the next day. (So much thanks goes to those who supplied firewood—we seemed to have an inexhaustible supply: I can specifically name Tessa and Nolan Scott, who also provided great maps.) Two groups emerged: those who didn't mind driving a longer distance to foray, and people who wished to stay in the closer vicinity. As it turned out, the former group traveled to Twenty-five Mile Creek Campground near Lake Chelan, and the latter (my group) drove the shorter distance to Foggy Dew Campground along Gold Creek Rd, 20 minutes up Hwy. 153, the next day, Saturday.

Saturday morning I was greeted by Angela Maiorello with a handful of morels she and Matt Gustke had casually picked up on a morning walk around camp. Everyone was very excited. After breakfast and a warming fire, we all took off. BOTH groups found *Morchella*, both burns and “naturals.” Rabbit discovered the first morels under red stem ceanothus (*C. sanguineous*), and that's where our group had the best success too. Terrain within the Okanogan National Forest consisted of old burn, blackened lodgepole and ponderosa trunks (some still green at the tops), ceanothus, serviceberry, arrowleaf balsamroot, and other shrubs taking advantage of the opened-up forest.

Other fungi were found: a fleshy white, succulent-looking bunched group that both smelled and tasted nice, but was vetoed by Fred, whom I had texted with a photo. It turned out to be *Lepista subconnexa*. Christine found beautiful *Lachnuella aria*, tiny bright yellow cups that, when dry, close to black lips. Nolan found two huge puffballs, *Calvatia*: one in edible shape, the other mustard yellow when cut open. Deformed *Gyromitra* were brought back to camp for Christine and Evan Sanford to identify along with many others. Thank you, Christine Roberts, for documenting the specimens we all found.

Back in camp a fire warmed us and we laid out our usual delicious potluck. Morels were sautéed, salads dressed, dishes heated over coleman stoves, and food cooked on the fire. It was GREAT to see people face to face whom we'd only known as names on a screen.

The next day, Sunday, dawned beautiful and sunny. People cleaned up camp and took off for home and other parts throughout the morning. Later in the day in Winthrop Jim and I happened on Bob and Jan Longstreth, who had been on the foray. They'd found a tidy bunch of burn morels in the Cub Creek Burn (2021) north and west of Winthrop. If only we hadn't been intimidated by the long drive on Saturday...oh well, next time.

Despite weather and not finding a HAUL of morels as some had hoped, everyone appeared to enjoy the camaraderie and beautiful setting. It was great to be with so many sharing people and no one certainly went hungry. Thank you to all who attended.

For PHOTOS, see next three pages!



Alta Lake camp



Burn morels and "blonde naturals"



Her first morel



Robin Morgan and Terri Wilde



Christine examining a specimen



Nolan Scott with his puffballs



Lepista subconnexa



A nice find



Tessa Scott and Angela Maiorello



Yum



Morel *in situ*