



Morel Booster™

Morel Mushroom News From Morel Mania, Inc.

Editor: Tom Nauman

Issue No. 12 • December, 2010

Sponsored By:

The National Morel Mushroom Festival
Boyne City, Michigan
The weekend after Mother's Day
morelfest.com

Holiday Special For
Morel Booster™
Subscribers

25% DISCOUNT

On Resin Morel Mania Products
(Catalog numbers that begin with "RM" or "MC")

To receive the discount, you must phone your order to us at:

800-438-4213

8:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. CST

This offer will not appear and is not available on our web site shopping cart.

SEE PAGE 2 FOR DETAILS

Morels in the Snow - With Bears!

I had the tremendous good fortune to be invited to go mushroom hunting with members of a private club in Northeast Michigan on Mother's Day weekend this past May. It truly was one of the most memorable weekends I've ever experienced. I'm not going to reveal the name of the organization or any of the members because they don't need, and probably don't want, the publicity. The group was founded in 1884 and owns forty square miles of private land! You would think such a club would have hundreds of members. I was astounded to discover they limit membership to approximately twenty.

On my route north on Friday, I picked up my good friend, Tom Licavoli, at Kalkaska. We then met up with Alex "Mad Russian" Babich. We arrived at the gate into the club late morning and continued several miles past a landing strip, several large farm fields, and lots of woods that looked great for morels. We also saw an abundance of wildlife, including a bear climbing a tree.

Arriving at the lodge, we noticed several identical Jeeps and were informed later that they are owned by club members and are neither licensed nor insured because they never leave the property. The lodge, which is over 100 years old, is a massive structure nestled on the eastern shore of an approximate one square mile lake. The weather didn't accommodate us to witness any sunsets, but I'm sure they are breathtaking.

We were greeted by club member "HS", given a tour of the lodge, and shown to our suites. Several members have private homes nearby. HS and other members choose to have their residences within the lodge. The Great Hall and Community Room were lined with trophy mounts, some of which were more than 100 years old. There were also photos of past members and framed articles attesting to the wildlife and natural resources conservation principles of the club.

We then had a quick lunch before departing for the morel grounds. I need to say "Thank You" to Brenda and staff for the wonderful meals throughout the weekend. The kitchen and dining room alone are larger than any hunting lodge I've ever seen before. And, they served morels at every meal!

We spent the afternoon touring areas that HS knew to produce morels among Ash trees. We also examined several Poppel (Poplar) tree areas and found morels, but not too many and they were scattered. I did not see a single Ash tree that did not appear to be "stressed". It may have been because it was still early Spring for the area, but I'm thinking it was more likely due to the infestation of the Emerald Ash Borer (EAB). I've mentioned in the August '10 issue of *Morel Booster™* that the jury is still out concerning what effect the demise of our Ash trees will have on the production of morels.

After a great dinner, Friday evening was spent discussing morels with the members. The outdoor thermometer was stuck in the upper 30's so the fireplace seemed to be where all congregated.

The snow began around 10 p.m. and was predicted to make for hazardous driving conditions. Alex was due in Mesick, Michigan for their festival in the morning and decided to depart around 1:00 a.m. on Saturday morning. The normal two-hour trip took five hours. His wife, Nanette and her parents, who were bringing his wares, mushroomgear.com, were also delayed due to the storm. We

Continued, see Morels, Snow, Bears on page 2

The *Morel Booster™* is free publication from Morel Mania, Inc.

8948 Illinois Highway 18 • Magnolia, Illinois 61336
email: tom@morelmania.com

Phone: 309-364-3319 • Web Site: <http://www.morelmania.com>

To subscribe: Send an email to tom@morelmania.com with "Subscribe" in the subject line.

If you no longer wish to receive the *Morel Booster™*, send an email with "Remove" in the subject line. If your email address changes, send an email to us and include both your old and new email addresses. Morel Mania, Inc. does not sell, rent, give away, or share addresses, phone numbers, or e-mail addresses. All of your information remains confidential.

Copyright 2010, Morel Mania, Inc.

Morels, Snow, Bears - continued from page 1

later heard the entire festival was rescheduled to a later weekend due to the storm.

Saturday morning did not appear to be very good for finding morels, especially to someone from Central Illinois. The snow was falling in quantities such that visibility was poor, the temperature was in the mid-30's, and Elm trees were few and far between. The snow wasn't accumulating on the ground though.

So, after a hearty breakfast, I departed for the woods with HS and John. On the way, I couldn't help but notice a pistol in the Jeep. My companions informed me that several members carry them to fire in the air to scare away any bears they may encounter while morel hunting.

The morels were fairly scarce for the first hour in several different locations. I did find the large cement morel which was hidden by a member the previous day. The discoverer is the "Champion" for the morel weekend. However, the prize is one of my Shroom Sticks™ and, since I have access to quite a few of them, I declined the trophy.

I carried the cement morel back to the Jeep and then went in a different direction. I soon discovered a half-free morel on a small ridge. Then, within an area of twenty feet, found another couple of dozen and the same amount or grey morels. Following the ridge was a unique experience. Approximately every second or third Ash tree produced a half-dozen, or so, morels of all three species: half-frees, grey/yellow/whites, and blacks. I also

Continued , see Morels, Snow, Bears on page 3

25% DISCOUNT ON ALL RESIN PRODUCTS UNTIL DECEMBER 19, 2010



Roan Rods™



Rain Gauge



Morel Garden



Morel Key Ring



Morel Christmas Ornament



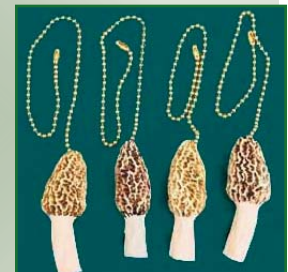
Big Morel



Pen Set



Morel Bottle Stopper



Morel Fan Pull



Morel Hat Pin



Morel Double



Morel Magnets

To receive the discount, you must phone your order to us at:

800-438-4213 (8:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. CST)

This offer will not appear and is not available on our web site shopping cart.

Mention the *Morel Booster™* when you order.

Discount offer expires 12/19/2010. *Discount does not apply to postage.

View the products by clicking the "Catalog" link at morelmania.com

Order by December 19 for delivery prior to Christmas.

Morels, Snow, Bears - continued from page 2

found several *Gyromitra esculentas*, which I left untouched.

While following the ridge, and several other similar ridges, I paid no attention to my general direction of travel. I had marked the last position of the Jeep on my GPS so all I needed to do was check it and follow the route back to the jeep, right? Wrong! The batteries were dead.

I do carry a minimum of three compasses but, by this time, I had walked around literally hundreds of trees and had no idea as to the direction of the Jeep. While a compass will tell you which way is north, south, etc., it won't help you if you don't know which direction you need to go. And, since it was snowing and overcast, my brain did not subconsciously record the usual keys such as sun position, wind direction, or the direction that shadows were pointing while I had wandered and gathered the morels. I almost wish the snow had been accumulating because I then would have merely followed my tracks.

I acknowledged to myself that I was somewhere in a forty square mile area with only a few seasonal roads that are only used by club members. I also acknowledged that it was cold and snowing. At that point, I started paying much closer attention to my compass(es). I decided to walk straight north for twenty minutes and, if I didn't find someone or something familiar, I would return to this exact spot and try a different direction.

As I walked, I continued to find morels, but paid close attention to the direction of travel upon departing the area of each Ash tree. I also remembered the scene from the movie, "The Edge", in which Anthony Hopkins states that most people lost in the woods die of "shame". They think, "What did I do wrong? How could I have gotten myself into this? So they sit there and die because they didn't do the one thing that would have saved their lives - **Think**." "The Edge" is one of my all time favorite movies, watch it if you get the chance.

I also remembered "Mountain Mel" Dewese's statement that the first of seven enemies of survival is "fear/anxiety"

<http://www.youwillsurvive.com/>

Mazeophobia, the fear of getting lost, had not hit me. After all, I follow the advise of outdoor writer, Len McDougall, that there are three must-have items for anyone heading into the woods. They are: a compass (with map), fire starter, and a knife. I had all three, sans the map. There was a map on the wall of the lodge, but I had only examined it briefly and had no idea of where my current location might have been pinpointed on it.

I also realized that even if I did reach the perimeter of the club, there may be countless more miles before I would reach a main thoroughfare or civilization. I resolved that if bad came to worse, I could build a fire for warmth and I had approximately three pounds of morels to be consumed if necessary. Some butter and a skillet would have been helpful, but the nearest supply would be back at the lodge. There was any service for the cell phone either or I might have added some salt to the order.

After just a few minutes, I came to one of the roads/trails used by the members. And, one of the Jeeps was approaching! I tried to flag the driver down, but he must have thought I was just being friendly or, he had a bunch of morels that he didn't feel like sharing with me, and waved back at me as he drove by without stopping.

Visit Morel Mania at the
IOWA SPORTSMAN OUTDOOR SHOW
January 7-9, 2011 • State Fairgrounds, Des Moines, Iowa
BOOTH #626
<http://www.iowasportsmanshow.com/>

So, I followed the road for a mile or so and, after finding nothing familiar and no people, reversed my direction. I had marked the location where I had first happened upon the road. It was about that time that I remembered the bears, pistols, etc. I additionally pondered that this was Spring and mama bears are very protective of their young cubs.

Luckily, I didn't have to ponder for very long as I soon heard voices in the woods. It was Tom Licavoli and the couple that he had been hunting with, Jim and Jan. They gave me a ride back to where my original companions were waiting patiently for me. After a good laugh, we returned to the lodge for another wonderful meal.

After lunch, John and I ventured to yet another area. It was one that several members had scouted with success in the morning. I made sure I stayed within shouting distance from John because I didn't want a repeat of the morning's adventure and there was nowhere to purchase new batteries for my GPS. We, too, were successful and found both black and grey morels in good quantities among the Ash trees.

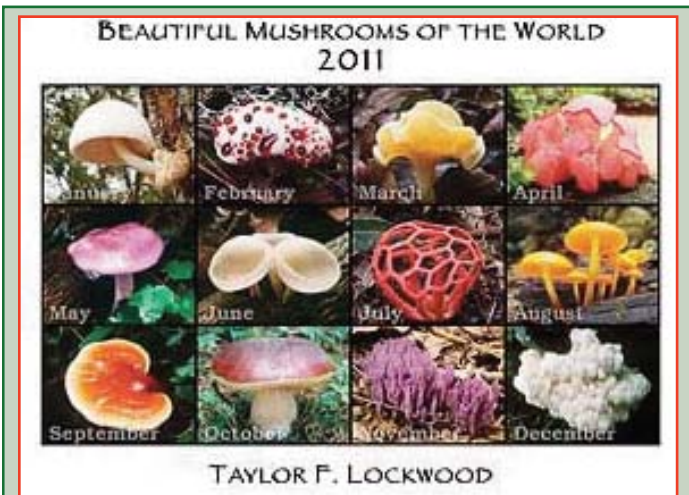
I've never been truly great at spotting black morels because they just don't grow in abundance in the areas I normally hunt. However, at one point, John and I were standing at the top of a slope deciding which way to go next. As I scanned the area, I noticed one particular Ash tree near the bottom of the slope about 200 feet from us. At the base of the tree my eyes caught that unmistakable shape of a black morel. I pointed it out to John and thought to myself "No way." But, when we reached the tree, sure enough, there it was, a five inch perfect black morel. And, I had spotted it from 200 feet! Maybe I'm better at it than I thought. But, then again, I had a lot of practice that morning. We returned to the lodge where yours truly promptly took a much needed nap.

During the discussions on Friday evening, Alex mentioned one of his favorite recipes, The Smotherlode, to HS. The main ingredients of The Smotherlode are salmon and morels (the recipe is on Alex's web site.) I was completely astounded to discover that the main course of the Saturday evening dinner was, in fact, The Smotherlode. HS had somehow acquired some salmon and gotten the recipe to the kitchen staff. It was truly scrumptious and the name is appropriate. The only drawback was that Alex wasn't there to enjoy it with us as he wasn't able to return from Mesick.

After dinner, a drawing was held for prizes for the morel weekend followed by additional morel discussion, fellowship with the members, and a viewing of Larry Lonik's "Motherlode" Video. I was invited to stay at the lodge and hunt morels the remainder of the week prior to attending the festival in Boyne City. But alas, the responsibilities of the business called and I departed for home after another delicious breakfast on Sunday.

The accommodations and hospitality of the club members and their staff were superb and unequalled in my experiences.

My sincerest "**Thank You**" to all.



2011 Mushroom Calendars Available
 We're pleased to announce Taylor Lockwood's
 "Beautiful Mushrooms of the World" Calendar
 for 2011. Our supply is limited, so order early!
 Order by December 19 for delivery prior to
 Christmas. Catalog #MB415. - \$15.00.
 Find them at www.more!mania.com
 on the "New/Miscellaneous" page.

Bad Rap for Mushrooms

I mentioned in an article last month that mushrooms and fungi get a bad rap historically. We live in a world with quite a few fungophobics, people who fear or loathe mushrooms. In his book, "All That the Rain Promises", David Arora says we Americans inherited that trait from our British ancestors.

Some fungophobics only have a disdain for wild mushrooms, but at least they'll consume the ones they've harvested at the local grocery store. I agree with Larry Lonik's comparison of the flavor store-bought mushrooms to morels as, "cardboard to steak."

Morels are only one example. Joe McFarland and Gregory M. Mueller in their book, "Edible Mushrooms of Illinois and Surrounding States", mention the variety of flavors found in different kinds of mushroom and even the different flavors to be found within the same species of mushroom found at different locations.

I chuckle when I hear the phrase, "I don't like the taste of mushrooms." That's like saying "I don't like the taste of fish", when, in reality, it's really just tuna that doesn't agree with your taste buds. Or, saying you don't eat any kind of fruit simply because you can't stand the taste of apricots.

Then there are those that won't eat any mushroom, for any number of reasons: "They're a fungi!", "They grow them in horse manure!", "There may be bugs in them!" My response to the latter two is to visit a commercial vegetable garden and witness the cow manure used and the number of insects (or worse, the amount of insecticide - except for organic farms) found on the product there. But, there probably aren't too many of those people reading this, so I'll terminate that line of thought.

Back to the bad rap. We all know that mushrooms are the secret ingredient of any witch's brew or potion. They're also

what caused Alice in Wonderland's problems. And, toads sit on them - Ick!

On the serious side, members of the kingdom of Fungi were the cause of the Irish Potato Famine (*Phytophthora infestans*) [Note: The potato blight might not even be a fungus, but rather a fungus-like organism that is a member of the kingdom of Chromista. But I'll leave that argument to the mycologists].

Another fungus, *Claviceps purpurea* - otherwise known as ergot, was possibly the root cause of affliction that resulted in the Salem Witch Trials. There are many other examples of ergot poisonings that have caused mass-hysteria in history. This species was also the original source from which LSD was first isolated.

I saw a report on PBS years ago that ergot might also have caused one of the seven plagues of Egypt - the death of the eldest sons. Okay, I don't want any arguments with Moses or his Superior in the next life, so let me repeat, I didn't think it up. It probably was truly an act of God. But, those silly scientists just can't leave well enough alone. I'm just reporting what I heard.

There are many more tragedies throughout history that have been attributed to mushrooms, some justified, some not. But now let's look at some comparisons. The most interesting is one that I believe I heard from Leon Shernoff, Editor of "Mushroom, The Journal of Wild Mushrooming"

<http://www.mushroomthejournal.com/>

"The ratio of poisonous to edible mushrooms is less than that of poisonous green plants to edible green plants." In other words, if you were lost and starving and had arrived at the point where you just absolutely had to consume something. And, if you had both green plants and mushrooms to choose from. You would have a better chance of not being poisoned if you opted for the mushrooms. The odds would be in your favor. So, if you're really scared of eating mushrooms because some can be poisonous, shouldn't you be more afraid of eating green plants? Leon, if I've misquoted you or if I should give credit to someone else, please accept my apologies and pass my thanks on to the responsible party.

Don't get me wrong, I'm not saying you should walk out into the yard and eat the next mushroom you find (mycologists call that "grazing"). If you're not sure of what you're eating - Don't eat it! Whatever color it is or whatever kingdom it belongs to. What I am saying is that fear is easily overcome with some knowledge and experience.

The known medicinal value of various member of the kingdom of fungi are numerous and I think the world has only begun to scratch the surface on the subject. But here's a good example - penicillin.

For those afraid of mushrooms simply because they are a fungus, I'm going to ruin your day by telling you to knock off the bread, beer and all alcohol, pretzels, ketchup, honey, etc. (the list would fill several pages.) And start checking labels for "MSG". All contain yeast - a fungus.

And, lastly, imagine what the world would be without the original recyclers, mushrooms. Mushrooms and fungi are decomposers in that they recycle nutrients in dead plant and animal matter.

So, the next time you hear someone dissin' mushrooms, I hope I've given you some ammunition to help educate them.