Alabama Mushroom Society's 2023/24 Winter Newsletter

SEASON'S GREETINGS from the Alabama Mushroom Society! Winter is here, and we hope that our newsletter finds you all healthy, happy, and warm! While we know that many of you mycophiles out there dread these cold, dark winter months, we do hope that the following pages will uplift your spirits-- and maybe even motivate you to search for the plethora of underrated cold weather fungi which we have here in Alabama!

Just as a reminder, December or January is also the perfect time to begin or renew your AMS membership! Benefits include:

- free monthly guided forays
- members-only events
- discounted or waived rates & first-notification of educational lectures
- $5 off a membership to the North American Mycological Association
- access to AMS lending library
- access to lender microscopes & supplies
- a vote for board-member elections
- access to our private online "Members Lounge"

MERRY MUSHMAS & A FUNGAL NEW YEAR!

MISSION STATEMENT:

Our mission is to educate the public about mushrooms, their identification, various uses and scientific, culinary and environmental value,whilst prioritizing safety; and to promote advancement in the science of mycology.

APPLYING THAT MISSION:

The field of mycology is always changing and growing, and we're here to help people catch-up and understand both identification and re-classification of species and genera that grow in our backyard. We have probably hundreds of unidentified species of mushrooms thriving right here in Alabama, and we seek to help create classifications for those mushrooms by working closely with herbariums, botanical gardens, & citizen scientists like you! But more importantly, we have a ton of fun foraging for elusive mushrooms, identifying them together, and eating the best of them!

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2023 Sequencing Results

By Alisha Millican

It is part of the Alabama Mushroom Society mission statement that we contribute to the science of mycology. In an effort to meet that goal, we have invested significant time, effort and funds into sequencing fungi collected in Alabama. Much of the collection has been done by our Collection Team who fulfills the collection part of our Alabama Fungal Diversity Project.

In 2023, we sent out over 500 specimens for sequencing. Many of these match other sequences that have been given a provisional name. What this means is that there is no genetic match with a formally described species. This could mean one of two things: either the formally described species has not been sequenced before, OR it is a new species to science. Until we have sequenced all the Type specimens (the collected mushroom that is representative of a species) there will remain a lot of questions as to these species identities.

Here, I am going to highlight the following: species that do not match any other previously sequenced fungi, species which are the first records for Alabama, and fungi which are otherwise interesting and noteworthy. Fungal sequences with no matches have all been given a provisional name "*AL01*". indicating that it was first found in Alabama--and that it is the first provisional name within that genus/species from Alabama. Unless otherwise attributed, I was the collector.

Strobilomyces "sp-AL01"

This species was collected in Cullman County and associates with pine. It doesn't appear to have any immediately recognizable distinctions from other common *Strobilomyces* species. You may hear us repeat that *Strobilomyces* species cannot be distinguished macroscopically, and this species is a prime example of that.

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Tolypocladium japonicum

This rare fungus from Japan that parasitizes deer truffles was first collected by Cody Rich in St. Clair County. We have many different species that are similar looking, but we were surprised when these proved to match the Japanese collections! AMS has now collected this species from two counties in Alabama and one in Texas.

Tylopilus "sp-AL01"

Kelcie Brown collected this bolete in Talledega County. This mildly flavored *Tylopilus* initially had us thinking it might be *Tylopilus badiceps*. We were surprised when sequencing came back as only an 88% match to anything else with the exception of a decent match to a soil sample from Costa Rica.

Lactarius "sp-AL01"

This fruit-scented *Lactarius* was collected in Cullman County. It has scant, lemon-yellow latex and a very sticky margin. I was initially calling this *Lactarius maculatipes* and it's possible that it is, but the type specimen has not been sequenced for us to compare. There is one other 100% match, from a soil sample in North Carolina.

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Mycena "sp-AL01"

This *tiny Mycena* growing on a Sweetgum Ball was collected by Aaron Glawson on an AMS foray in Cullman County. The closest sequenced match is only a 98% match to a *Mycena* collected in Spain.

Scytinostroma artocreas

These rigid, nearly cup-like structures were found growing on a deciduous branch near a creek. They were collected by Flown Kimmerling in Etowah County. This is the first documentation of this species in Alabama.

Trechispora "sp-AL01"

This specimen was collected in Jefferson County. This interesting genus contains both flat, crust fungi and coral shaped mushrooms.

Clavulina "sp-AL01"

This coral shaped mushroom was collected in Cullman County. There are no close matches in available databases, which isn't surprising considering the genera that fall under the "corals" umbrella need a lot of work.

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Gliophorus "psittacinus-AL01"
This sticky mushroom was collected in Cullman County. With less than a 98% match to any other sequenced specimens, this is likely something new.

Stilbocrea macrostoma
This fascinating fungus has two synnematous anamorphs. Collected multiple times in Cullman County, this is the first sequenced specimen from North America in the databases.

Aleuria cestrica
These vibrant orange ascomycetes were found growing at a disturbed forest edge in Etowah County, Alabama. This Alabama-first was collected by Flown Kimmerling.

Russula "sp-IN30"
Looking a whole lot like what we would call *Russula parvovirecens* with orange spots, this is actually *Russula "sp-IN30"* (the *IN* indicates the first sequence came out of Indiana) This is the first record of this species occurring in Alabama.

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Lactarius neotabidus

Collected by Flown Kimmerling in Etowah County, below River Birch (*Betula nigra)*, this gorgeous milkcap is the first ever documentation of this species in Alabama. We weren't able to save enough material to voucher this one, so keep your eye out for these tiny guys!

Entoloma "sp-AL01"

This adorably tiny *Entoloma*, collected in Cullman County, is, like SO MANY *Entoloma*, likely undescribed. This is a genus that will benefit from sequencing followed by description by mycologists.

Rhodocollybia "maculata-AL01"

Collected in Cullman County, this lookalike for the European *Rhodocollybia maculata var. Scorzonerea* doesn't have any close matches in available databases.

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65+ EVENTS A YEAR

50+ FORAYS

Monthly Foray — 45+
February - October in 5 counties: Baldwin, Cullman, Tallapoosa, Jefferson.

Morel Foray — 1
Jefferson county in the spring. Hosted with Feral Foraging and Magic City Mushrooms.

Chanterelle Foray — 2+
June - August central and north Alabama.

Black Light Foray — 2+
February - October central and north Alabama.

15+ OTHERS

Monthly Speaker — 9
February - October a new guest speaker each month over zoom.

AMF — 1
Alabama Mushroom Faire is in the fall, forays, talks, vendors, food, and more.

Others — 5+
Microscopy, Dyeing with mushrooms, Birds and mushrooms, How to use a field guide, Nature Journaling Mushrooms, and more events.

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FORAGE FOR MUSHROOMS

C B K Q Y N B Z S A X Y M O C R A S R A J K F B N A O G M L
K S S I U N S C X H E L V E L L A L S U T O L A H P M O M S
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K U J S Y V L G Q K X F Z X W O B O I P O U X A B V Z G A U
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O H T D B X A Y O O P R P O T A E U C N I N C H F H I L T A
P M P G F J C Z T I L Q G S N S N G I S U O Q X L U E K E I
C X B U U X T K R V P E N Y A O R G P S L E N U D P E R R T
K S U T O D I P E R C J N R H M N P O S U L I P I R E M E A
G G E T Q F Q H M R B X M T B X Q I R J G N Y S S E F R L V
K G V E F S R V E F V I C U I V P O U P H T T D N C R M L L
R G N W O L C V L G L U V O F N E A S Y T A E I T Q Y O U A
U O O A K F X L L L H F H H H P U G A N O D E R M A N R S C
S I A I W E Z R A D N O B P S I S S A R A P S E W L B C F P
S L E I H G M R X D N X Z E A R Y A P K B Q E R D V L H Y A
U S U U L F I T C A L P P U M S U L L E N A P P H E F E F V
L U T O T A Q A E S L A E T I P O R U S F J Z T R T U L I B
A L W D H Y P O M Y C E S P G D E L G Z M Q V O K F A L I J
U L O S H X Q Y K X X Y X U A T H Y D N U M D X L G A A V A
O A L V I V A M U I C I R E H N H N O T N E P O E U G W J D
A H J P O A L L E M E R T Z B R E T R R R C D T T P Q K M X
U P E L Y C O P E R D O N J I S E T E M A R T V R B I Z L C
U C N C L T G A N I L U T S I F M Z A W A R M I L L A R I A
I S U O D H J X C J I Z K R Y A D I X A L O F I R G L E E Q

APIOPERDON
BONDARZEWIA
COPRINUS
CREPIDOTUS
FISTULINA
GYROMITRA
HYDNUM
INONOTUS
LACTIFLUUS
LYCOPERDON
NEOLENTINUS
PHAEOTREMELLA
POLYPORUS
SCLERODERMA
TREMELLA
ARMILLARIA
CALVATIA
CORTINARIUS
DESARMILLARIA
GANODERMA
HELVELLA
HYGROPHOROPSIS
IRPICIPORUS
LAETIPORUS
MERIPILUS
OMPHALOTUS
PHALLUS
RUSSULA
SPARASSIS
URNULA
AURICULARIA
CANTHARELLUS
CRATERELLUS
EXIDIA
GRIFOLA
HERICIUM
HYPOMYCES
LACTARIUS
LEPISTA
MORCHELLA
PANELLUS
PLEUROTUS
SARCOMYXA
TRAMETES

WORD SEARCH CREATED BY LEIGH MANESS

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In Search of Light in the Darkness

by Flown Kimmerling

It is around two weeks away from the darkest day of the year, and many of us have felt our own inner spark diminishing alongside the light of the sun. The unofficial mushroom season ended weeks ago, and it is easy to feel like the recent drought in Alabama has deprived us of so many opportunities for mushrooming in the woods.

***Cantharellus sp.* growing below beech, Etowah County, Alabama. Late summer 2023. Flown Kimmerling**

Summer wraps us in her warm embrace year after year, and it feels as though she always has her own special remedy for anything that may burden or distress us. Once Fall has passed and Winter has arrived, we can't help but be left with a yearning for Summer's gifts: the aroma of sun-kissed pine needles and beech leaves mingling with chanterelles. The flavor of ripe blackberries and warm muscadines on our parched tongues. An almost endless orchestra of wildlife filling the balmy air. The slippery sensation of mud between our toes. Cool raindrops on our hot cheeks.

Summer captivates us and restores us, and when her light leaves it can feel as though she has abandoned us. Our hearts ache for her abundance and her spiritual renewal, and sometimes our own memories of her do not feel like enough to power us through the darker months. Millions of people in the US wrestle with Seasonal Affective Order (SAD) every year, so it isn't inconceivable that many a mycophile experience a general worsening of their mental and physical health during during the this time of year.

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The gloom and gray and cold (and decrease in mushroom activity) oftentimes influence our daily emotional states, and we can pretty easily find ourselves overtaken by a sort of seasonal inertia—recoiling from the bitterness of the outdoors and unintentionally furthering our disconnection from Nature herself. Some of us may find ourselves seeking out warmth in other places--gravitating towards twinkling Christmas lights, comforting foods, and warm libations—completely oblivious to the many gifts that may lie waiting to be discovered in our own back yards or nearby woodlands.

The Stinking Oyster (*Phyllotopsis nidulans)* grows in clusters on rotting wood, its peak seasonality in the US spanning October through February.

Many mushroom enthusiasts have a predilection for species that are either eye-catching or have some culinary appeal—while only a limited amount of fungiphiles devote themselves to the pursuit or study of the more obscure (and often underappreciated) fungi. No matter which type of fungal adventurer we may be, Winter can provide each and every one of us with a multitude of exciting experiences and opportunities for learning.

Juniper Apple Rust (*Gymnosporangium juniperi-virginianae*)- this fungal gall can sometimes be found on Eastern Redcedar (*Juniperus virginiana*) during the winter season.

At first glance, our natural areas may appear devoid of any fungi in wintertime—which may make us less inclined to explore them any further. Most of the foliage has died back, and our forest floors are covered by a blanket of brown leaves and pine needles that crunch under our feet. It may feel bleak and disheartening, but this barren setting also means that there are far less things to distract us: less poison ivy to avoid, less ticks and chiggers and mosquitoes seeking out blood meals, and less sweat trickling down our backs. If we take advantage of the clarity that this season affords us and begin exploring, we will find that there is an expansive world of fungi below our feet and at our fingertips!

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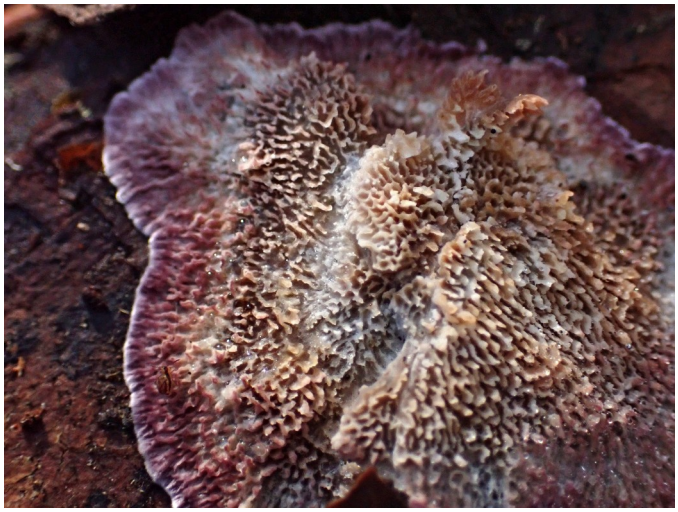
While several species of fungi do go dormant with the onset of wintry weather, there are many that thrive in the cooler (and often wetter) conditions we experience here in Alabama. Several of these fungi are readily visible in our forests, while some less conspicuous species demand creativity in their detection (e.g. using hand lenses or magnifying glasses).

Fungi of all shapes, colors, textures, and sizes can be found in a variety of habitats here in Alabama: emerging from fallen twigs, decorating in-tact branches, hiding under leaf litter, erupting from mounds of moss, and forming shelves on tree scars. Inspecting a woodpile or flipping a log may reveal a dazzling array of crusts, polypores, and other exciting surprises—all reminders that we are never truly alone despite the perceived gloom and cheerlessness of this season.

Furthermore, our sometimes wildly shifting weather patterns here in Alabama allow for intermittent flushes of fungi that we wouldn't typically expect during the cold season. Our mini-heat waves and extreme rain events often serve as an opportunity for some fungi to resurface and briefly flourish!

I will now share a glimpse of just some of the fungi that can be found in Alabama during this time of year! For a more comprehensive look at what may be growing near you, CLICK HERE!



***Trichaptum sp.* on a rotting pine log**

The Humpback (Cantharellula umbonata) growing on a mossy stone outcrop

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Hygrophorus erubescens gracilis growing under pine

Peach-Colored Fly Agaric *(Amanita persicina)* growing beneath pines after a winter heat wave.

***Arthrophaga myriapodina*-parasitizing a millipede.**

***Mycoacia fuscoatra* on highly rotted wood**

***Complex Hygrocybe flavescens* growing in a flood plain below hardwoods.**

Deer-Colored Trametes *(Trametopsis cervina)* on conifer wood

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Lion's Mane Fungus *(Hericium erinaceus) on oak tree*

Funeral Bells *(Galerina marginata)* on highly rotted wood

Cobalt Crust Fungus *(Terana coerulea)* growing on a fallen hardwood branch

Grey Waxcaps *(Cuphophyllus lacmus)* growing in leaf litter under mostly pine.

Rosy Conk *(Rhodofomes cajanderi)* growing on a fallen pine tree

Coral-Pink Merulius *(Phlebia incarnata)* growing on hardwood alongside *Stereum sp.*

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Spread the joy of the holiday season with a North American Mycological Association membership gift! NAMA is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization of professional and amateur mycologists with over 90 affiliated mycological societies in the United States, Canada and Mexico. Since 1959, NAMA has been North America's leader in mycological education, research, conservation and advocacy of responsible mushroom use. With a mission dedicated to promoting all things mushroom-related, it's the perfect present for the mushroom enthusiasts on your gift list.

Gift memberships are available at three gifting levels and will be received by the recipient the week of 12/26/23. Follow this link and spread the joy of fungi this holiday season!

https://namyco.org/gift/

Thank you for your support and have a wonderful holiday season!

Luke Smithson
Membership Manager, NAMA

Microscope & Book Lending Program for AMS Members

AMS has two compound microscopes with all needed supplies to perform fungal microscopy. This includes slides, immersion oil, cover slips, tweezers, razor blades, mounting chemicals, etc. Members must complete one of our microscopy courses or otherwise demonstrate proficiency in using a compound microscope in order to borrow one.

We also have a lending library! Available books can be viewed HERE! It works just like your public library; you may borrow a book for two weeks and then bring it back.

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Oyster Mushroom & Caramelized Fennel Bread Pudding

by Kevin Hébert

Winter is here and the mushrooms are golden. This super savory bread pudding makes a great holiday dish for any table, combining sweet caramelized fennel, earthy oyster mushrooms, fragrant herbs, and a creamy custard-like texture.

Ingredients (about 10 servings):

12 oz Oyster Mushrooms (*Pleurotus ostreatus*)
1 large fennel bulb
4 cloves garlic
1 french baguette
1 ½ tbsp fresh rosemary
1 ½ tbsp fresh thyme
½ tbsp fresh oregano
1 bunch chives
3 cups milk
1 stick butter
6 eggs
6 slices thick cut bacon
¼ cup white wine
Salt
Pepper

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Directions:

Step 1: Prep the baguette
The day before cooking, slice the baguette into 2 inch cubes, loosely cover and leave on the counter overnight (so that it gets slightly stale).

Step 2: Soak the baguette
About three hours prior to baking, whisk the milk and eggs together in a large bowl and lightly season with salt and pepper. Add the cut baguette pieces to a large bowl and gently stir them in the liquid. Cover and put in the fridge, stirring every half hour or so to saturate the bread. If you need to add more liquid, stick to the ½ cup milk per egg ratio.

Step 3: Prep and cook the ingredients
Set the oven to 350 and add the bacon to a parchment lined baking sheet. Add the bacon to the oven when it is heated and cook for about 30 minutes, turning occasionally. Slice the fennel, mince the garlic, separate the mushroom cluster and cut off the lower ⅔ of the mushroom stems. Slice the mushrooms in half. Finely chop the fresh herbs and slice the chives into 1 inch batons. Heat a saute pan to medium high and add the sliced fennel and ½ stick of butter. Lightly season with salt and pepper and stir occasionally until caramelized. Add the wine to the hot pan and cook a few more minutes until the liquid has cooked off, then transfer the fennel to a bowl and set it aside. Add some more butter to the pan and then add the mushrooms in a single layer with a sprinkle of salt. Cook, turning occasionally until the edges are crisp and golden. Add the minced garlic to the pan and stir frequently for about 2 more minutes, then turn off the heat and add the mushrooms to the bowl with the fennel.

Step 4: Make the pudding
Grease the inside of a deep 8x12 baking dish (or similar size) with butter. Melt any remaining butter. To the bowl of soaked bread, add the chopped herbs, cooked fennel, garlic, and mushrooms, and gently stir to combine evenly. Scoop the mixture into the baking dish with a slotted spoon to create an even layer. On the top layer, turn the crusty parts of the bread upward, then pour any remaining liquid over the top. Cover with foil and cook in the oven for about 30 minutes. When the bacon is almost done, remove it from the oven and chop it into pieces.

Step 5: Finish the pudding
After the pudding has cooked for 30 minutes or so remove it from the oven. Brush the crusty bread tops with the melted butter and sprinkle the chopped bacon over the top, then add the dish back to the oven, uncovered, and cook for another 20 minutes or so, or until the bread tops are golden and crispy. Remove the pudding from the oven and garnish with the chive batons. Let cool for a bit and then it is ready to serve!

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FunDiS Southeast Rare Fungi Challenge

Here are the Rare Fungi target species for our area! We will be pushing this hard and looking for folks to seek out these potentially rare species. A treasure hunt of the most exciting kind- fungi! Find details HERE!

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Mushroom Malarkey

by Cassie Pugh

Mycologists are on the daunting quest to sway mycophobia so that they may more adequately benefit from the academic and often culinary fruits of our fungal friends. Let's explore the most commonly heard mushroom malarkey floating around so we can spread the spores of knowledge and bring the joy of studying and foraging fungi safely to light.

Myth #1: MUSHROOMS ARE PLANTS

One of the biggest misconceptions about fungi is that they are plants. However, they belong to a kingdom all of their own due to their composition, how they obtain nutrients, and their ecological roles. Plants are producers through photosynthesis, animals are consumers through ingestion and digestion, while fungi are decomposers through absorption and reduction. Unlike plants, fungi lack chloroplasts to produce food through photosynthesis and rely on the secretion of enzymes in order to breakdown the substrate and absorb its nutrients (much like animals). Fungi also contain chitin within their cell walls. This polymer is not found within the plant kingdom but **IS** found in the exoskeletons of crustaceans and arthropods! Similar to plants, the main mode of movement for fungi is through growth. Unlike many plants, they have spores--some of which are flagellated, allowing them to travel through air or water. Taking all of these differences into consideration, it's easy to see why they belong in their own kingdom.

Myth #2: PULLING OR PICKING MUSHROOMS WILL DISCOURAGE FUTURE GROWTH

Another common myth is that picking mushrooms will endanger them and keep them from coming back. Many people believe that mushrooms should be left undisturbed, but this couldn't be further from the truth. The main body of the fungi is found underground or within decaying wood as a dense network of fiber like structures called the mycelium. What we're seeing on the surface is actually the reproductive fruit of the fungi. Just like picking fruit from a tree won't harm the tree, picking mushrooms will not hurt the mycelial body hidden beneath the surface. *Note: Of course, one should still abide by ethical foraging etiquette and local laws!*

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Myth #3: GARLIC, POTATOES, AND SPOONS? OH MY!

Depending on how long you've been a mushroom enthusiast, you may have heard some old wives' tales about determining the toxicity of a mushroom through placing garlic, potatoes or a silver spoon in your mushroom basket. Some tales claim that toxic mushrooms will turn water black (when being cooked or soaked), while others claim that any mushrooms that bruise blue are toxic. These methods of determining toxicity are of course false. Many chemicals and enzymes, both toxic and nontoxic alike, can trigger these chemical reactions and should never be used to determine if a mushroom is safe to ingest or not. The only fail-safe method of determining a fungi's edibility is through 1) self-education on toxic species in your foraging area and 2) having more than one reliable resource to double check your knowledge in the face of uncertainty.

Myth #4: IT IS UNSAFE TO TOUCH OR TASTE FUNGI

Cases of individual allergies aside, ALL MUSHROOMS are safe to touch and even taste. In fact, touch and taste can be important factors in identifying many types of mushrooms. The toxic enzymes of certain fungi must be digested and processed through the liver in order to cause harm, so a "spit test" can be used to help narrow down the ID of an unknown mushroom. This process is carried out by taking a very small portion of the fruiting body (usually the cap) and chewing it briefly between the front teeth (while tasting it with the tip of the tongue) before spitting all of it out.

I hoped this article has helped clear up some of the common mushroom malarkey so that you can feel more confident in your future fungi foraging. Nowadays there are tons of great books and groups (both in person and on social media) that have many knowledgeable experts who enjoy helping foragers and academics learn more about the wonderful world of fungi around them! I hope you take advantage of these fantastic resources and keep spreading the spores of knowledge about foraging fungi!

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November Calendar Contest Winner

Congratulations to our November Calendar Contest Winner, Flown Kimmerling, with their photo of *Fibroporia radiculosa* taken in Etowah County! Go submit your own mushroom photos on **December's Calendar Contest** on our Facebook page!!

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2024 Scavenger Hunt

Have you heard about our scavenger hunt yet?! Find and properly identify as many mushrooms in Alabama as you can and **win prizes** at the end of the 2024! You get credit for finding the mushrooms when you add them to our project on iNaturalist.

Read the rules in their entirety on our website. Any observations you upload to iNaturalist will be automatically submitted to the project after joining. Joining the project is easy!

1. Download the iNaturalist app on your smartphone or access it via the website, www.inaturalist.org .
2. Sign up for free to make your account.
3. Join the iNaturalist project titled **"AMS 2024 Scavenger Hunt".**

↠Must be a paid AMS member to win!

SOME OF OUR PREVIOUS PRIZES ARE SHOWN BELOW!

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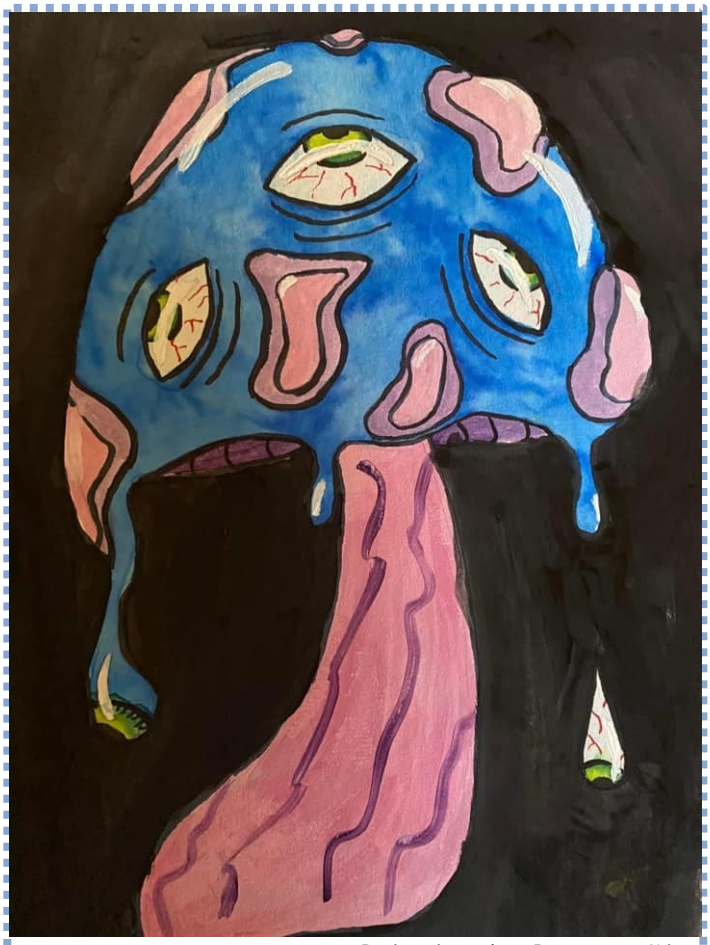
AMS Creative Corner

Poetry submission by Alisha Millican - inspired by a photo by David George Haskell.

Weeping widow of the meadow
tears as black as ink drip down
who is there to hold you now?

All you once were, whisked away
losing grasp of your very essence
Deliquescence

Much too soon
the beauty of your youth does fade
as you pour yourself into tears
and wash away.



Painting by Destany Kim

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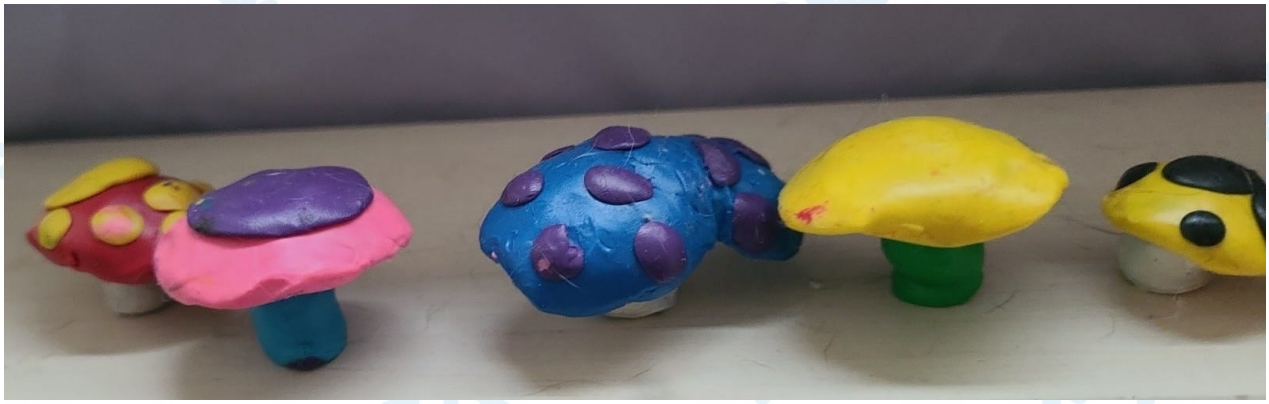
AMS Creative Corner

Mixed media resin creations by Jennifer Taylor @The Mushroom Preserve



Clay mushroom creations by Emma Boaz (Age 10)

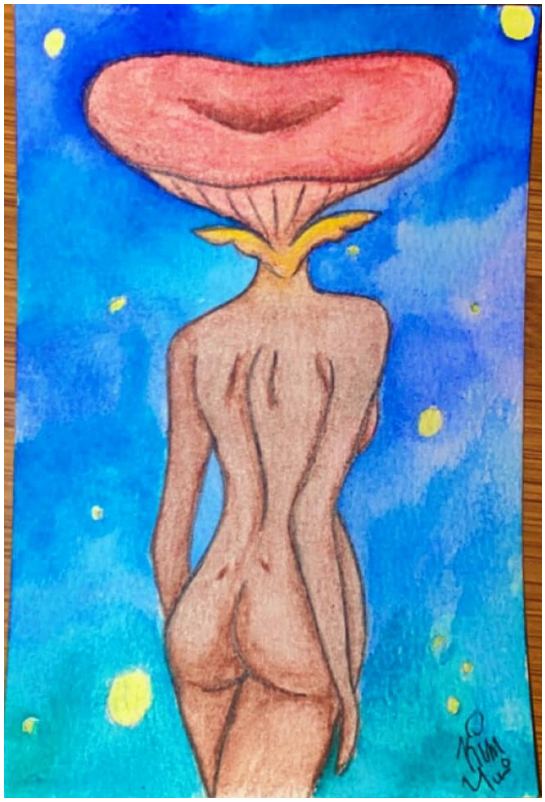
Layout & Editing by Flown Kimmerling
https://alabamamushroomsociety.org/

Alabama Mushroom Society's 2023/24 Winter Newsletter

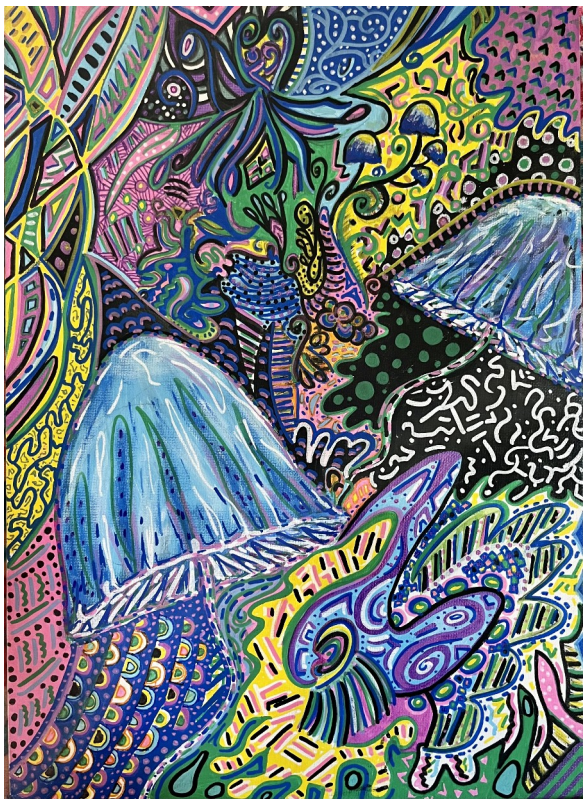
AMS Creative Corner



Sculpey clay art by Spencer Lowery



Painting by Destany Kim



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