

# MushRumors

Newsletter of the Northwest Mushroomers Association

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The white barrel bird's nest, *Nidula niveotomentosa*, near Acme, Washington, December 2020. Photo by Richard Morrison



## #ThatWasTheYearThatWas Mark Johnson

Needless to say 2020 was an unusual year for our club, but I will say it anyway, “Twenty-twenty was a very weird year for our mushroomers club!” As you may recall (by not recalling them!), there was no spring Survivors’ Banquet this year, no organized forays, no potlucks or cooking demos, no in-person meetings, no annual show, and no ID classes.

So, what did we do? The club’s board met more often this year than during some years when all of these things did happen. Cancelling each of these normal activities ahead of time required

much discussion, and we went at it on a month-by-month basis, trying to remain hopeful that things would get better.

Club members forayed by themselves and with their pod members and shared pictures of what they found. They also got identification online through our interactive google groups emails, and on iNaturalist. This awesome newsletter continued to come out. We also joined the “Zoom Era” culture with several talks: in August, Daniel Winkler gave a talk about the intriguing

*Continued next page*

**Contents: 3 Walks, Finds | 5 McAdoo | 6 MotM | 8 FunDis | 9 Candy cap | 10 au gratin | 11 NMA**



Mark looks into his crystal ball for 2021

*Cordyceps* mushrooms of the world; in September, Fred Rhoades presented an introductory lecture on fungi common to our area; and in November Buck McAdoo described aspects of his new book, *Profiles of Northwest Fungi* (which includes many of our club's members in it, by the way).

This fall, our membership chair Mariella Kerr compiled a slideshow of submitted photos which should be up on Vimeo for your viewing pleasure by the time you read this. All of our 2020 Board members volunteered to continue serving in 2021 and all were properly elected then “seated” as the new board in November.

All of you who were club members in 2019 had your memberships extended through to the end of 2020, no charge. And at our December board meeting it was decided that to be fair, all of those people who joined the club in 2020 would have their membership continued through 2021 with no new dues due. Which brings us to the future.

## President's Predictions

Next month, on Thursday, January 14, Richard Morrison gives a talk to the club (and anyone else who wants to watch). Holding a general meeting in January, when the club is usually on a break, is unusual, if not a first! Stay tuned to email and [northwestmushroomers.org](http://northwestmushroomers.org) for more details.

While it is true that the vaccine campaign will be up and rolling by February, and the US President-elect has promised to get 100 million people vaccinated in his first hundred days, my crystal ball and basic math tells me that there will be approximately 228 million unvaccinated people in the country come April 20. Since it is unlikely that the virus will “magically” go away by March, we will not be having an in-person Survivors' Banquet this spring.

Yet despite the cloudiness in my crystal sphere, there's a possibility that it may be safe to plan on our annual Mushroom Show come next fall. As soon as the Bellingham Parks Department will accept reservations, we will try to reserve a weekend in October. Please watch our website for more information. If the Pandemic continues past the summer, we can cancel the reservation.

Gazing into the glass globe too long can do funny things to one's vision, but I do see vignettes of small groups of people foraging together in the coming year. But, in the vision I saw no classic spring mushrooms in their baskets. So, I predict that these small group forays are taking place in the fall rather than the spring. One of the brightest of these visions shows the bridge at Deception Pass quite clearly, so I predict a 2021 Dilly Foray next November at Bowman Bay, one way or another.

I also see more Zoom talks in 2021, although the inside of the Squalicum Yacht Clubhouse remains shrouded in mystery. Will there be in-person monthly meetings? In-person ID classes? We do not know. If you do some scrying yourself, whether with tea leaves, cards, runes, or medical statistical software, let me know what YOU see! Cheers,

Dr. Mark Johnson, president, NMA

## NMA online

**Save the date:** January 14, 2021, 7–9 p.m., Dr. Richard Morrison presents at our general membership meeting, “The Elusive Concept of Species: How human attempts to define Mother Nature apply to the Kingdom of Fungi.”

**2020 fall mushroom slideshow:** Fantastic fungi images, <https://vimeo.com/492735082>, captured by NMA members and brought to you by NMA's Mariella Kerr to lighten your holidays.

**Flash to the past:** Dr. Fred Rhoades on “Mushroom Identification Up Close and Personal,” presented on Zoom in October, <https://vimeo.com/468361402>

# A walk in the woods

Christine Roberts

During a recent, socially distanced walk with friend Jo who lives right next to the local woods, she showed me her mushroom discoveries along the trail. Near the entrance was *Cuphophyllus pratensis*, which I knew from back in England as a tasty treat. It has undergone a bunch of name changes so here are a few to choose from: *Hygrocybe pratensis*, *Hygrophorus pratensis*, *Camarophyllus pratensis*, or meadow waxy-cap. These were past their prime so are not destined for the pot, but Jo had never found them before and has discovered the joys of identification challenges. The next along was on an alder stump and turned out to be a giant *Hypholoma lateritium*, 12–13 cm in diameter. More normal-sized ones covered the rest of the stump.

Jo then pointed across the creek to a cream-colored frilly thing on a log. Whooping with anticipation of *Sparassis crispa*, I scrambled up the bank and along the narrow ridge opposite to get to the mushroom. The rotten log was lying at a steep angle above a perilous drop, so I had to peep through a little hemlock to see it. Would have needed a small helicopter to get to it, where were those drone enthusiasts when we needed them?

News flash! I just called Jo to report my findings. She told me I should have turned around at the waxy cap, as there was a sizeable fruiting of it just behind—rats!

Next month I invite other mushroomers to tell of their walks in the woods. It can be technical or chatty—pending disasters not necessary. Contact [Christine](#), with the subject line, “Woods walk.”



A walk in the woods can reveal many things. Photo: Erin Moore

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## Some late season finds at the Stimpson Family Nature Reserve

Buck McAdoo

On the morning of December 6, 2020, my friend Heidi Gustafson came to town for coffee and then hopefully a walk. Three of the four days before this rendezvous there had been ice on my windshield in the mornings. I figured the mushroom season was gone, even here on the coast. But I remembered the advice of Judy Roger, a mentor of mine from Oregon. She mentioned that all the great mycologists visited the Pacific Northwest at one time or another, but they all packed it up and went home when the November rains started in. As a result, speculated Judy, a lot of late-season species were neglected. There might not be much out there, but what you did find could represent species unknown to science.

So, in hopes that the old-growth forest at the Stimpson kept the air warmer under the trees, we headed out there. The parking lot was almost full. We met people right away on the main trail, and figuring my collecting bucket would attract stares and comments, and not wanting to sound like a repetitive

robot for the rest of the day, we headed off trail. Heidi and Jairul Rahaman share one talent. Not one miniscule fungus escapes their attentions. She soon had five taxa lined up for me, mostly in the genus *Inocybe*. And then she went into second gear. On the following page are photos of the specimens she found.

First, coming off a hardwood log, what looked like a white polypore with a cottony texture. To touch it was to squish it. Frankly, I had not seen this before. Next, a pale-brown-capped *Mycena* with white gills with purple edges. The round basal bulb was bristling with hairs. I had seen this once before at Rockport State Park but had lost the specimen. Finally, a tiny straw-colored species with very sticky caps. They had an ungulate growth pattern on an alder stick. *Crepidotus* does this, but I'd never seen one with a sticky cap. Besides, I have a hunch the spore print was white. It was very scant.

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*Late season finds, continued*

We eventually worked our way over to an old-growth island next to the beaver pond. This island was actually created by the beavers. Heidi immediately spotted the Cloud Mushroom, a.k.a. *Clitocybe nebularis*. She was not thrilled with the powerful odor of skunk cabbage, but for me, it tripped another memory button. Decades ago I had gone on a foray in the French Alps, and when the chanterelles failed to appear, the French had collected these instead. They pickled them! I have tried over and over again to find a French pickling recipe on the internet only to get general pickling directions. *Mais, tant pis!* I decided I would pickle these two specimens anyway.

We soon ran into breaks of *Cortinarius malicorius*, which is great for dyeing, and the non-descript *Cortinarius duracinus*. There were quite a few Russulas in various conditions of after-frost decay. Then Heidi spotted some truly large fungi from 40 yards



*Rhodocollybia maculata* var. *occidentalis*



What looks like a white polypore



Tiny straw-colored species



Pale-brown-capped *Mycena*



*Tricholoma zelleri*

away. These turned out to be *Tricholoma zelleri*, pictured above. My former mentor, Judy Roger herself, had always maintained they were the same as the European *Tricholoma focale*. I had always wanted to sequence our *T. zelleri* to prove this or not, and now the opportunity had arrived.

Our final find of the day, pictured here on the right, was a Collybioid species with a deeply rooting stem. I had first thought it to be a *Phaeocollybia*, but most of those have slimy caps. The white gills and stems with rusty spots, plus the eventual pale pink spore print, soon led me to *Rhodocollybia*. This turned out to be *Rhodocollybia maculata* var. *occidentalis* in my own Key Council key. Another first for me, and yet another opportunity to see what sequencing does with a variety of something common.

So from a breakfast at the Mount Bakery where we wondered what we would do with the rest of the morning, we got off our duffs and found a rather intriguing assortment of late-season fungi. They will all be sent to Spain for sequencing. Just another example of the incredible variety one can find at the Stimpson. I'll be happy to share the sequencing results with you, when they come back. Whether of great interest or not, the specimens will be handed to Dr. Fred Rhoades for eventual inclusion in the herbarium at WWU.

# NMA's Buck McAdoo honored with mushroom species named *Agaricus buckmacadooi*

Richard Morrison

Buck McAdoo, long-time NMA club member, master mushroom identifier, founder of NMA's "Mushroom of the Month" newsletter articles, and author most recently of the book *Profiles of Northwest Fungi*, has an *Agaricus* species named after him.

Being one of the most prolific mushroom hunters and identifiers in the Pacific Northwest, Buck has made many collections of *Agaricus* over the years. Some of these collections were sent to *Agaricus* researcher Dr. Rick Kerrigan who was studying and describing new species using morphology, chemistry, ecology, and phylogeny based on DNA sequences. In 2016 Dr. Kerrigan completed his study and published the monograph *Agaricus of North America*. In it, one of Buck's collections was the first sequenced specimen of a new species, which Dr. Kerrigan named *Agaricus buckmacadooi* as a tribute to Buck's contributions to *Agaricus* science. *A. buckmacadooi* is one of several outwardly similar looking Portobello-like mushrooms in the western United States that in the past have been lumped under the names *A. praeclaresquamosis* or *A. moelleri*. These mushrooms have a somewhat unpleasant sweetish tar-like odor, and are known to cause unpleasant gastric discomfort.

The astute reader might notice that Buck's last name is spelled McAdoo, not MacAdoo, although the species was formally named *A. buckmacadooi*. However, once validly published in the scientific literature the name must stand unchanged; thus, adding another likely unique chapter to Buck's intriguing history.



*Agaricus buckmacadooi* collection B-49 from which the holotype specimen that defines the species was designated. The collection was made by Buck off Sauk Mountain Road, Skagit County, WA, Sept. 12, 2008. Photo by Buck McAdoo



Buck McAdoo striking a professorial pose in his mushroom lair at the Herald Building in Bellingham, WA, December 14, 2020. Photo by Richard Morrison

## Mushroom of the Month

# *Agaricus subrufescentoides* (Murrill)

Buck McAdoo and Richard Morrison



Fig. 1. *Agaricus subrufescentoides* found in the Stimpson Family Nature Reserve, October 2007. Photo by Buck McAdoo

Around midafternoon on October 20, 2007, Buck McAdoo and Jack Waytz were moseying about in the Stimpson Family Nature Reserve just east of Bellingham, Washington. This is a coastal old-growth forest with lots of hemlock, cedar, and fir. While heading up the main trail they spotted a break of *Agaricus* in conifer duff. There were six specimens in all. It had been raining heavily the three days prior. Any more precipitation and the duff might have morphed into muskeg. They noticed three of the specimens had caps that appeared more waterlogged and actually had changed color to a grayish blood red. The other three had not changed color. It dawned on them that they could be looking at two different species, so they proceeded to separate them and took photos of both groups.

*Agaricus hondensis* has long been the most common *Agaricus* in the Stimpson Family Nature Reserve. Caps can vary from brownish to a dark pinkish-gray. After heavy rains, this pinkish gray looks more soggy and turns a darker, blood red gray. That took care of three of the specimens. The other three had dark cinnamon scales on a buff background (Fig. 1). Later that day when Buck was back in his all-purpose office, he failed to identify the unknown species using Pacific Northwest Key Council keys, although it came very close to *A. helodes*, an unpublished nom. prov. (provisional name). However, the specimens had

smooth, white stems instead of the shiny white fibrils of *A. helodes*, ruling out this species.

Buck's description of the unknown find follows: Caps up to 6½ cm wide, convex with in-rolled margins at first. Shallowly umbonate. Discs and scales a dark cinnamon color on a buff ground. KOH turns the surface instantly yellow. Gills free, crowded, grayish-flesh color. Stipe 6½–8½ cm long and 5–6 mm thick. Sheeny white, tapering towards apex. Base clavate. No color change when rubbed or scratched. Ring—2 mm thick, felty, white. Upper part striated and stained lightly red-brown. Odor mild at first. Unpleasantly medicinal after a night in a waxed bag. Spores dark brown, elliptical, measuring 5.7–7.2 x 3.5–4.2 microns. Cheilocystidia shaped like bowling pins. The habitat as described above.

And thus the matter rested for a number of years, the specimens just hanging out in Buck's herbarium along with dozens of other mysteries awaiting their moment in the sun. Eventually Buck heard through the grapevine that mycologist Dr. Richard Kerrigan was at work on a monograph to be named *Agaricus of North America*. Buck subsequently mailed Dr. Kerrigan a photo from the Stimpson find, and he agreed to look at specimens. But he went beyond that and DNA sequenced them. The mushroom turned out to be in Section Xanthodermatei, Subsection Hondensis, and was identified as *A. subrufescentoides*, a species found by W. A. Murrill in 1911 in woods near Seattle, but hadn't been recorded since. Murrill officially published this species in the journal *Mycologia* in 1912.

When Dr. Kerrigan finally published his massive and brilliant *Agaricus of North America* monograph, there were some discrepancies between Buck's description and Murrill's. His stipe widths were 1–1½ cm wide compared to Buck's at 5–6 mm. thick, the stems bruised slightly reddish-brown compared to no color change; and instead of ventricose-rostrate cheilocystidia, both Murrill and Kerrigan reported cheilocystidia to be rare, if present at all. The few seen were reported as broadly clavate to almost subglobose. Buck is still scratching his head over this difference. Although Buck's spore sizes matched up well with

Murrill's, Dr. Kerrigan found different spore sizes coming from different collections of the five collections he studied, and suggested this may indicate a phylogenetic complex with certain variable morphological traits.

In October 2019 Richard Morrison happened across a group of handsome Portobello-like *Agaricus* in various development stages under cottonwood and conifers at Lookout Mountain Preserve outside of Bellingham (Fig. 2). Just the type of group an ardent mushroom photographer hopes to find. He also had hoped it might be one of the prized edible species. Instead, the somewhat complex tarry-sweet odor of a crushed stem suggested it was probably one of the toxic species that cause gastric distress.

Using Dr. Kerrigan's *Agaricus of North America* the mushroom keyed out to *A. subrufescentoides*, matching both macro- and micro-characters. Spore measurements were of the smaller spore size form with a mean of 5.5 x 3.8 um. A specimen was DNA sequenced and ITS was a 99.9% match with Buck's two collections sequenced by Dr. Kerrigan. According to

Kerrigan the DNA sequence is unique, and close to *A. hondensis* and a European species, *A. freirei*.

The edibility of *A. subrufescentoides* has apparently not been evaluated, or not reported. But like other members of the Xanthodermatei, the tarry-sweet phenolic odor of crushed flesh indicates it is likely toxic, resulting in gastric discomfort, vomiting, etc. *A. subrufescentoides* seems to be a somewhat uncommon species, although NMA member Sharon Squazzo has reported several collections in the Bellingham area recently. Those foraging for mushrooms as food should be aware of *A. subrufescentoides* and learn to distinguish it from edible *Agaricus* species.

#### References

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- Murrill, W. A. 1912. The Agaricaceae of the Pacific Coast III. *Mycologia* 4:294-308.



Fig. 2. *Agaricus subrufescentoides* found in Lookout Mountain Forest Preserve, October 2019. Photo by Richard Morrison



*Pleomana speirea* (a.k.a *Mycena speirea*) Stimpson Family Nature Reserve 2019—Stereo RL (cross your eyes). Images by Fred Rhoades

## Stimpson FunDis sequencing project Fred Rhoades

This is an update of an article I wrote for the June 2019 newsletter. Refer [here for the link](#) for that additional background.

The idea of producing a “North American Mycoflora” crystallized at scientific meetings in 2012. Now it has morphed into the “Fungal Diversity Survey” (FunDis for short) so as to rid the project of the misguided “flora” character. (Fungi are NOT plants!) The idea is to involve citizen scientists in making voucher collections (saved in an herbarium such as the one at WWU) and providing bits of these collections for DNA sequencing. To do the actual sequencing, FunDis has now partnered with BOLD (Barcode of Life Data System), based in Guelph, Ontario. You can find lots more background on [FunDis, here](#) and on [BOLD, here](#).

Over the years since the beginning of my time in Bellingham, I and others have collected fungi in the area that is now known as the Stimpson Family Nature Reserve, a county park and DNR land off Lake Louise Road, southeast of Bellingham. To date over 420 species of fungi and slime molds have been seen in the area. It has been clear from the beginning that many of the species we have seen there are not necessarily fully known to science. So the time has long been right for our group to take on a FunDis-type project. In September we finally sent off 100 samples for DNA sequencing. We have had the benefit of support from a FunDis grant and also a ~\$1500 grant from our own club (thank you all very much!)

We want to expand to include other interested club members

working on this project. Actual collecting will be limited to a few, as the DNR maintains the need for a collecting permit on their part of the Stimpson and collecting is otherwise prohibited. However anyone can be involved by visiting the property and making photographic observations using the iNaturalist system. [iNaturalist \(click here\)](#) observations will help in three ways:

1. You will help continue to document the presence of species that we already have seen, without disturbing their “fruitings”. Ongoing observations such as these are extremely valuable in documenting the yearly presence and phenology (timing of fruiting) of known species in the database.

2. You will file an iNaturalist photographic record of your observation. This will add to the iNaturalist knowledge of mushrooms in our area which anyone can examine.

3. Your observations will likely uncover species (completely new, or that we have seen in the past but not collected) that we want to make vouchers of and sequence. One of us can immediately revisit the location and collect suitable material for a voucher and sequencing. Later, your iNaturalist record will be used as part of the database we send to FunDis with the samples for sequencing.

If you are interested in being involved in this, please [contact me](#). We will want to get together (most likely Zoom) early next year to discuss protocols for this ongoing project.



# Candy Cap, *Lactarius rubidus*, confirmed in Skagit County

Richard Morrison and Dawn Sodd

The candy cap mushroom, *Lactarius rubidus*, is a common inhabitant of coastal forests from central California into southern Oregon, but is less common farther north into the Pacific Northwest. It is mycorrhizal with a range of hardwood and coniferous trees, but can also occur on rotting conifer wood. In Washington State, populations of *L. rubidus* are found mostly from the Seattle area south, and are often associated with Douglas fir.

In late December 2016, NMA member Dawn Sodd was fairly confident she found the candy cap fruiting under a pair of large, mature edible chestnut trees (*Castanea sativa*) at an old farmstead in Skagit County, as the mushrooms fit the species description and when dried emitted a strong odor of maple syrup. Not being absolutely sure these were candy caps, Dawn didn't use them in cooking for about two years, but they still retained the strong maple syrup odor which, when she did cook them, was imparted to her recipes. Dawn returned to the chestnut tree site each year afterwards, but found no candy caps until December 2019 when small fruitings began and continued through March 2020.

Following the December 2019 find, Dawn gave specimens to NMA science advisor Dr. Fred Rhoades, which he tentatively identified as *L. rubidus*. Fred then passed specimens to Richard Morrison who confirmed the identification based on microscopic traits and odor. A sample was also sent to a lab for DNA sequencing, and it came back as a 100% ITS match with the *L. rubidus* collection from San Mateo County, CA (KC691205 in GenBank) studied in a scientific paper by M. Kuo, et. al, which validated *L. rubidus* as the species name for this mushroom.

As the Skagit candy cap occurred under non-native, edible chestnut, it likely arrived as an ectomycorrhizal symbiont with these trees when they were planted. *L. rubidus* has a fairly wide range of tree associations, from hardwoods to conifers, but we could find no specific information that it is mycorrhizal with edible chestnut. The time period when Dawn made her collections during the typically cold months of December into March is unusual for a *Lactarius* in our region, yet coincides with *Lactarius* species in southern Washington. In California and



Candy cap mushrooms (*Lactarius rubidus*) collected by Dawn Sodd in Skagit County, December 2019. Photo by Dawn Sodd

Oregon the candy cap is reported to fruit from late fall to spring. Daniel Winkler's mushroom booklet, *A Field Guide to Edible Mushrooms in the Pacific Northwest*, discusses the candy cap that occurs in our area.

DNA sequencing of other Washington State *L. rubidus* collections has apparently not been done, so their genetic relatedness to California collections is unknown at this time. However, NMA member Matthew Koons, who lives in the Seattle area and collects the candy cap from that region, has indicated he will be submitting a sample for sequencing. So, an answer may be forthcoming.

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*A recipe to warm your solstice*

## Potato oyster mushroom au gratin

*This is one of the dishes that I have prepared for my yearly cooking seminar for members.—Jack Waytz*

Taken from *Kochen Mit Pilzen Vom Steinpilz bis zum Pfifferling* by Otus

*Translated from the original German*

### Potato oyster mushroom au gratin

800 g potatoes. I use Yukon gold  
250 ml heavy whipping cream  
250 ml milk  
Salt, pepper, ground nutmeg to taste  
Pinch of cayenne pepper  
1 bay leaf  
1 twig rosemary  
1 twig thyme  
2 garlic cloves  
500 g oyster mushrooms  
3–4 tablespoons of butter  
Butter for greasing the form  
450 french gruyere cheese, shredded  
Rosemary for garnish (fresh)



*Pleurotus ostreatus* collected on Lummi Island.  
Photo by Nina Laden



1. Peel the potatoes, and slice very thin. (I use a device for that.)
2. Put the milk and cream together in a good sized pot, and bring to a slow boil. Blend in the salt, pepper, nutmeg, and cayenne pepper.
3. Put the bay leaf, rosemary, thyme, and peeled garlic into a spice bag, and put the bag into the boiling cream. Add the sliced potatoes and stir frequently until the cream begins to thicken.
4. Clean and cut the oyster mushrooms into bite sized chunks. Melt the butter in a saucepan and sautee the mushrooms with continuous stirring until slightly browned.

5. Remove the spice bag from the potatoes, and carefully blend in the mushrooms.
6. Place the mixture into an appropriately sized greased casserole, and top with the shredded gruyere cheese. Set oven to 190° Centigrade (375° Fahrenheit/US ovens) and bake for 40 minutes. The cheese should be light brown on top. Decorate with fresh rosemary to taste.



## Northwest Mushroomers Association

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Northwest Mushroomers Association promotes the understanding and appreciation of mushrooms, furthering the study of fungi, their identification, natural history, ecology, and conservation. We serve mushroom enthusiasts in northwestern Washington State, including Whatcom, Skagit, and Island Counties.

In 2020, NMA switched to online meetings and forays. On a monthly basis, our Board reevaluates when to resume in-person get togethers, classes, and events. Stay apprised of events and more by joining NMA and our googlegroups email list. Or visit:

[northwestmushroomers.org/events](http://northwestmushroomers.org/events)  
[www.instagram.com/northwestmushroomers](https://www.instagram.com/northwestmushroomers)  
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A large fruiting of robust *Stropharia ambigua* mushrooms in wood chips near Bellingham, WA, November 2020.  
Photo: Richard Morrison