

## **Cumberland Mycological Society Mushroom Forays**

**CMS obtains permits** to collect mushrooms at various parks in Tennessee. Foray dates and locations are published and regularly updated on the club web site. On foray days, members meet at a specified time and location, divide into multiple groups, gather mushrooms for 2 to 3 hours, meet back for a picnic lunch, and spread out the morning's finds on tables. Mushrooms are then sorted, identified and labeled. Mid afternoon, at the end of the foray, a 45 minute (or so) educational talk is usually given to describe the finds of the day. A visiting scientific advisor often helps with the identification and the talk. Identification continues after forays by experienced members and/or scientific advisers, who take desired specimens home to be studied, often with the aid of a microscope. Identified specimens are recorded onto species lists, which are accessible on the club's web site. The lists are submitted to the Tennessee Resource Management Division annually as part of the Natural Heritage Inventory Program.

### **What to expect and what to bring to a Foray**

**Since mushroom forays take place** in forests, be prepared for hiking. It's essential to carry drinking water, and also a good idea to carry snacks and any medications or first aid you might require. Wear clothing suitable for the weather and comfortable shoes or boots that give good support and traction on hiking trails. Flip flops or sandals are not recommended, because of the possibility of snake bites. Tick season usually corresponds with mushroom season, so be prepared to deal with them, especially if you ever wander off the trail into high grass or foliage. If you apply insect spray, do it away from others so they won't breathe any toxic overspray. Ticks are often very tiny, extremely sneaky, and can make a person very sick, especially if they are bitten in for a long period of time. It's a good idea to wear light-colored clothing and check yourself frequently, removing any as quickly as possible with good quality tweezers (always remove attached ticks as close to the skin as possible -never grab the tick in the middle, which can force the tick to regurgitate bacteria into the bite). Some also recommend placing some rubbing alcohol on the site of the tick bite. We have seen venomous snakes on club forays -both copperheads and rattlesnakes. If left alone, snakes will mind their own business. Just watch your step, and be careful when reaching for a mushroom to be sure no snakes are close by. Other hazards in the woods include bees,

rough hiking terrain, roots and rocks in the trail that can easily be tripped over, and dangerous ledges and cliff overhangs -so watch your step and always exercise caution. Stay together with your group. If you decide to leave early during the walk, notify your group leader so they won't wonder what happened to you. For gathering mushrooms, an open-top basket with a handle is most suitable. Small waxed bags work best for placing mushrooms in. We have them available at forays. A knife or digging tool is a good idea to dig up the base of a mushroom, as removal of the entire specimen can be an essential part of identification. And finally, be sure to bring your lunch for the picnic after the hike. It's important to arrive on time. If you arrive to the foray late, you will miss the orientation, and you might get left behind.

### **Notes regarding edible and poisonous mushrooms**

**The main purpose of CMS** is to promote the enjoyment, study and exchange of information about wild mushrooms in East and Middle Tennessee. While the main emphasis is on mushroom identification, various members bring a variety of mushroom-related interests to the club. Among them include; hiking, mushroom photography, extracting dyes from mushrooms for yarns, microscopy (observation of mushroom parts through a microscope), learning about edible, poisonous and medicinal mushrooms, and exploring the relationship of fungus with the natural environment.

Since some join to learn about edible mushrooms, the club makes it clear that each member is solely responsible for their decisions regarding consumption. For beginners, joining a mushroom club can really help their identification skills. When learning from more experienced mushroom hunters at club forays, however, be advised that they can make mistakes. Even the experts will misidentify specimens from time to time. A person should never eat a mushroom unless they are 100% sure of its identification. Each member agrees that if they choose to consume wild mushrooms, they assume full liability for the risk, and they release the club, its officers, and all club members from any liability.