

PVMA White Mountains Foray 2019

Five days of Intensive Fun & Learning!

By Claus Schlund



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With respect to mushrooms, I'm nothing more than a beginner. When I heard I had a chance to spend five days in August out in the woods, foraging every day with a bunch of mushroom experts, well, you didn't have to ask me twice!

That's exactly what we all did – twelve of us went up to Bethlehem NH and stayed at Dianna Smith's house. Each day, we went on two forays – the morning foray was usually about 2 hours or so, then we paused to take a break and ate the lunch we packed for ourselves before we left the house, and then another (shorter) foray on a second trail for that day. All along the way, we collected samples to bring back for identification, and when luck smiled upon us we also brought back some delicious edibles to prepare for the dinner table that night.

While it's great to be among mushroom experts, it's even better when you have two local guides available to take you around. Ginny and Roz came with us; they are both mushroom experts, but more importantly, they knew the ins and outs of every single trail we walked.

After returning to the house, we spent the late afternoon hours inspecting and identifying the huge array of mushroom samples that came back with us. At first I thought, well, I'm such a beginner, what can I contribute? Eventually it dawned on me I should just pick up a mushroom off the table, a field guide, and get to work! Once identified, every species on the table got a small paper label. At the end of the five days, we had gathered and identified a total of 286 different species – wow!



Hungry? How about some oyster mushroom slices on freshly made garlic bread...

Breakfast and lunch were generally do-it-yourself affairs, put together at the house. But dinner was a very different experience – we had a luxurious meal every night! Before arriving, we had a sign-up sheet for dinner menu items, so people could bring whatever ingredients and special supplies they might need. We made side dishes with any tasty



Out on the trail

mushrooms that we found that day on a catch-as-catch-can basis, since you never know what you are going to stumble across on that day's foray. A different team did the cooking each night, and afterward anyone who DIDN'T do the cooking that night helped with chores and dirty dishes and clean-up. And the best part was, nobody needed to be the boss, everyone simply got up and found a useful task to do – many hands really do make for light work! Our sleeping



Mary and Lloyd in the kitchen. Evening meals were spectacular!

arrangements consisted of shared bedrooms and floor space on air mattresses, and this was a perfect way to get to know your "bunkmates" a little better.

To further add to the learning experience, each morning



Dianna explains some of the finer points of mushroom identification to the crowd during a morning table talk – we had placed identification tags next to each mushroom the day before.

Dianna gave a talk about what we found the day before, highlighting any noteworthy or new species and answering questions like "how do you tell this apart from that?" For myself, I remember looking at the table with 80 to 100 different mushrooms on it, and it seemed just overwhelming to me – I knew I couldn't possibly remember everything that was there. Dianna pulled me aside and she made this suggestion to me: "You can't memorize the whole table, so don't even try. Instead, every day, just select three or four species from the table that are of interest to you. Look them over, and learn them really, really well, to the point where you can unmistakably recognize them again going forward. Do this

every day, and you'll begin to build the required basis to become proficient." And now more than a month out from that trip, I find myself walking in the Massachusetts woods and thinking to myself – Oh yeah, I remember, we saw that same species in New Hampshire!

*Dianna with a gigantic *Ganoderma applanatum*.*



While searching for mushrooms, we got to visit some spectacular sights, like the Basin Cascade in nearby Lincoln NH

"I think the foray was fabulous. The participants were engaged and appeared to learn a lot. I had a great microscopy session with Jess (Whitaker). The food was exceptional. And it got me out in the woods! With so many eyes, we did very well. Everyone greatly appreciated Dianna sharing her house. Thank you for including me!" – Roz Lowen

"The walks, all in beautiful places, and the table talks were a great place to learn from Dianna, Roz, and fellow members. The meals were excellent, with everyone doing their part in preparation and clean up. The foray was everything I expected it to be and more. I am very grateful to Dianna for her generosity in sharing her vacation home with us."

– Mary Obrzut



The happy mushroom-hunting crew!