

Foray 2007

Newfoundland and Labrador

I was fortunate enough to participate in the 2007 Foray Newfoundland and Labrador which was held in late September on the Avalon Peninsula and Burry Heights. The organizer, Andrus Voitk, has, in just a few short years, taken the event from a casual gathering to a real mycological machine. It is organized very well and ran seamlessly. Andrus is a retired medical doctor and pretty much devotes all his time these days to the mushrooms of NL, including this foray. As I understand it, several professional scientists make the trip regularly, including Dave Malloch and Greg Thorn (both from Canada and both were on hand in 2007); two experts on *Cortinarius* came from the University of Helsinki in Finland (Kare Liimatainen and Tuula Niskanen); Jorinde Nuytinck of the University of Ghent, a world expert on *Lactarius*; and a number of other experts were there, including Nancy Ironside, Vello Soots, and Tony Wright of the Toronto club; and Bill Richards of the Edmonton Club. Faye Murrin is the local professional mycologist and she teaches at Memorial University in St. John's. In recent years, the NL Foray has attracted other familiar experts like Ron Peterson, Noah Siegel, Jack Greene, and Lorelei Norvell.

As I'd mentioned, Andrus really has the foray well organized. He has a crew of local professionals and volunteers that handle many of the details. All specimens are vouchered, professional photographers set up an area for documentation, expert ID'ers work the tables, and a fleet of college students handle the data entry. Andrus has sponsors that handle much of the expenses: delicious food is supplied, beer donated from a local microbrewery, the wine (I was surprised to learn that it is possible to make wine in NL, though I'd never heard of most of the fruits used!) came from a local winery, and he gets a lot of help from the provincial government as well. Most important to me wherever I go is the food, which was terrific! Especially noteworthy was the "cook-up" of 200 lbs of moose burgers. And as you'd expect, Newfoundland is a seafood lover's paradise. Be prepared to eat cod. Lots and lots of cod, including cod cheeks and cod tongues, with scallops thrown in for variety. The mycophagy events were over the top! Mycophages rejoiced over seemingly bottomless platters of chanterelle and hedgehog dishes; I savored my first tastes of *Catathelasma* (which, contrary to reports in many guidebooks, was succulent). Several different donated items were given as prizes, including beautiful artwork and clothing from the NL Parks Service. (Maybe I shouldn't have mentioned that last part...the Parks Service may be unaware of their "donation.") Foray NL has excellent audiovisual equipment



Cortinarius camphoratus and *C. traganus*.

and the brand new guidebook to NL mushrooms was just published (by Andrus) and everyone attending received a copy. (See a review of this gem of a guidebook elsewhere in this issue.)

As the theme for 2007 was the 300th anniversary of the birth of Linnaeus, there were a number of freebies, including a book that everyone received, courtesy of the Swedish government. And get this: the Swedish Ambassador to Canada came all the way from Ottawa to give a speech and present gifts to us. I was pretty impressed! Of course, Andrus was sure to get his usual press coverage: the front page of the provincial newspaper, *The Telegram*, featured a story (Sept. 17, 2007 edition), photos, and graphic; the second page was also mostly devoted to the mushroom forayers. After the foray, I stayed on in Newfoundland for another week; folks in other towns saw my backpack with mushroom logos and asked if I was attending the NL foray. I was totally shocked...it was my closest brush with being a celebrity!



Catathelasma: "The Big Cat"

But seriously, the real stars are the mushrooms. Early Fall 2007, Newfoundland was dry according to the locals. But with much of the habitats boggy, I wasn't convinced. The abundance of mushrooms everywhere wasn't supportive of the claims either. And I mean mushrooms. Dozens of species of Corts were found in every color; just try distinguishing between the two purple spp



Suillus cavipes among larch trees.

shown! And so many species that I've rarely or never seen. From Matsutake and the Big Cat (*Catathelasma ventricosum*) which is among the largest gilled mushrooms in the world, to the Lilliputian *Mycena adonis*, a lipstick colored little bog beauty. Other bog mushrooms included the larch loving *Suillus cavipes*. And where in North America can you be assured of seeing the strikingly beautiful *Amanita wellsii*? There it was among the windblown tuckamores of Cape St. Mary's, towering over its mycorrhizal tree host—the tiny bearberry willow (*Salix uva-ursa*) that rarely gets more than an inch or two tall!

If planning a trip, here are a few notes. Newfoundland is fairly large, but is easily traveled; the highways are very nice. It's an 8 hr drive from one side to the other at the widest point. Within easy drives from a central location, one could end up in disparate mushroom habitat: forest, bog, barrens, montane, etc. We found LOTS of mushrooms everywhere we went. Every year they find



Editor Britt Bunyard, Andrus Voitk, and the First Secretary of the Swedish Embassy to Canada, Fredrik Alfer (left to right) examine a specimen of *Amanita wellsii* at Cape St. Mary's in Newfoundland. Photo courtesy of Anita Moyst.

new records for Newfoundland and Labrador; occasionally new records for North America. (Tune in to future issues of *FUNGI* for details.)

Besides foraging, there's much else to do in NL, including sightseeing; there are numerous fjords, mountains, bogs, wilderness areas and provincial parks. Not one, but TWO World Heritage Sights (Gros Morne Provincial Park and L'Anse aux Meadows, the first settlement of the Vikings in the New World in 1,000AD). Also, there's lots of wildlife: caribou—no kidding, large colonies of sea birds like puffins, whales and icebergs are seen from shore during their migration seasons. Moose are everywhere. Some days I saw more moose than humans. (There's even a very common mushroom up there, *Stropharia alcis*, that grows only in moose dung!) As for history and an all-around pretty

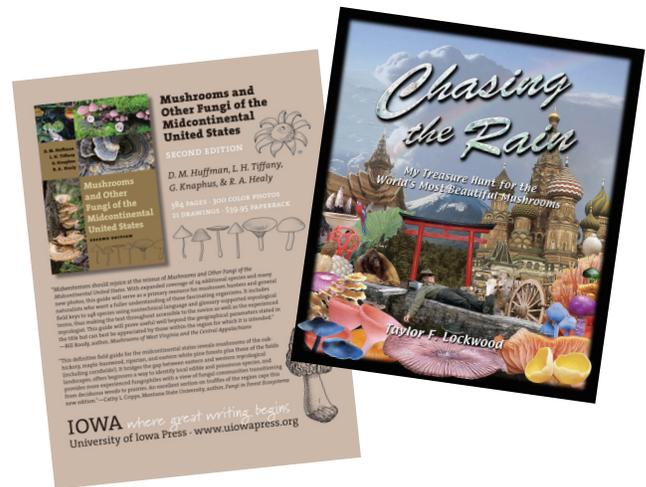
town, you can't beat St. John's. It's the oldest city in North America, and the jumping off point for most travelers coming from abroad. There are lots of flights every day from Newark, NJ, if coming from the US. There are hourly flights every day from Toronto.



Stropharia alcis.

Visit the *FUNGI* website to see lots more full size images from Newfoundland, as well as links to Foray Newfoundland and Labrador, complete species lists for forays there, and much more! -Britt

Books to be reviewed in the next FUNGI:



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