



Fungus Among Us 2016 Final Report



Grantee Name: Whistler Naturalists

Grant Number: 20160009

Final Report Due Date: November 30, 2016

Award Date: April 20, 2016

1. What did the project accomplish?

The event has been successfully completed. Our 14th Annual Fungus Among Us event accomplished its goals as follows:

- ***Provide, encourage or support scientific research that benefits the environment:***
Fungus Among Us brings provincial experts to Whistler to conduct scientific inventory of local fungi. This year we hosted 25 provincial experts during the event, the highest number yet for our event.
- ***Provide, encourage or support public education or raise public awareness about environmental stewardship:***

Public events

Public events include Friday night talks, Saturday morning forays in small groups followed by an afternoon cooking demo and public fungi display. These events support education and raise awareness of how many different fungi species call Whistler home and promotes environmental stewardship.

Our public events were a success in attracting a full range of interested people. The Friday evening presentations were Luke Mikler's "Fungal Fotos", Kem Luther's "Look ma! No gills!" and Andy MacKinnon & Erin Feldman's "Mushy Musings". We also hosted the first ever BYOM (bring your own mushroom) contest and gave out fun awards.

Our "Walks with Gurus" attracted approximately 100 people, many of whom were first-time attendees.

The always popular cooking demo, this year again with chef Bruce Worden, featured the following dishes:

- Hedgehog Velouté
- Autumn Mushroom Strudel
- Bbq Mushroom Slider
- "Seafood Medley" with Miso Gravy (Lobster, King Oyster and Blue Oyster Mushrooms)
- Candied Matsutake With Honeyed Cream and Raspberry

Many also attended the free mushroom display where all 179 species were expertly identified, labelled and displayed on tables. This final part of the event is always a highlight. Beginners and experts alike mingle among the tables and share their questions, knowledge, and excitement.



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Elementary school fieldtrips

Mycologists Andy MacKinnon and Erin Feldman made a visit to Myrtle Philip Community School on the Friday before the evening fungus talks. They met with Ms. Hamersley's and Mme. Millan's classes, took them out on a field trip, did spore print activities and more! Everyone had fun, learned a lot, and we hope to continue school visits by Fungus Among Us scientists in the future. The thank-you letters the scientists and Naturalists received letters are reprinted at the end of the report.

Quest presentation

As well, some scientists also stopped at Quest University on the way to Whistler and presented to keen students, many of whom joined us on Saturday for the guided walks.

We love that our event can reach out to so many different groups of people who are so excited to learn about fungi! Environmental stewardship happens when people appreciate nature; and appreciation of nature is a result of education.

- ***Inventory natural resources for environmental management planning purposes:***

A greater understanding of the diversity of Whistler fungi is an important outcome of Fungus Among Us, and each year we add to that understanding.

- The total number of species (at least, there may be more as things shake out) from the weekend was 183. Of these, 24 have not been recorded before. As usual, we're amazed by how much diversity is in the woods, how much it changes each year, and how many new species the experts continue to find.
- Fungus Among Us is an extension of the efforts by the Whistler Biodiversity Project and Whistler Naturalists. New species are added to the catalogue kept by the Whistler Biodiversity Project for community use and benefit. The total number of fungi on the WBP list is now almost 900.

2. Were there any other unintended results? Please describe.

An unintended result was that numbers of participants were down a bit from previous years. We think a contributing factor was the severe storm warning forecasted for the weekend – people did not want to plan to be in the woods. We also increased prices for the events for the first time in a long time, but it's unclear if that had a direct affect.

3. What can your group do better now than it could do before?

We meet new participants at each Fungus Among Us event and it's a very important way to get residents more involved in nature and local conservation. We had a few new members volunteering for the event this year and it was great to see fresh faces excited about the natural world. Also, each Fungus Among Us



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teaches us about new species which helps us: (a) learn more about local species diversity; (b) plan future surveys; and (c) help guide conservation efforts.

4. What were the most important lessons learned?

- Each year we're reminded of what a big appetite there is in the community and beyond for events like Fungus Among Us
- Of 183 species documented, 24 (13%) were new to our lists. In spite of 14 years of surveys and Fungus Among Us, we continue to find lots of previously undocumented diversity.

5. If the project was unable to meet one or several objectives, why not? What happened?

The project met all objectives.

6. How did the project promote partnerships and participation by people of diverse backgrounds?

It seems like our Fungus Among Us festival always attracts a wide range of interested fungal folks who have the opportunity to share their love of mushrooms and other fungi.

7. How was the community involved in the evaluation process?

The community provided excellent feedback directly to Fungus Among Us organizers about how much they (and in many cases their families) enjoyed the event.

8. How will you use the project evaluation results?

We will take all feedback into consideration when planning future Fungus Among Us events. Survey data that is collected will be incorporated into the work of the Whistler Biodiversity Project in the form of lists or maps that will be publicly accessible via their respective websites.

9. Please attach a detailed financial accounting of all grant funds.

Please see attached.

10. How did the actual project expenses and income compare to the budget projections?

Actual expenses were very close to budget projections. Increases in travel costs are our main cost challenge, especially the ferry expenses incurred by most of the gurus who travel here from Vancouver Island.

11. Other comments:

We sincerely thank the CFOW for its continued support of our goal of increasing local knowledge of and appreciation for the natural world in the Whistler area.



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12. Please attach media coverage/materials/success stories and photos that we may use in the promotion of CFOW grant success stories.

A participant's heart felt thank you letter to one of our Fungus Gurus, Andy MacKinnon:

Dear Andy,

I wanted to express my gratitude to you and Erin for taking us on a wonderful walk through the woods to explore the diversity of fungi here in Whistler BC. I also want to thank the Whistler Naturalists for putting on such an incredible event in our community.

You might remember: My husband and I and our two boys were on your tour (esposo de Argentina).

Since our walk together, there has been an explosion of mushroom curiosity/appreciation in our household. Most of the curiosity has come from our two sons, Javier and Isa, who have been foraging and looking for mushrooms ever since the Fungus Among Us event. Not even the heavy rains have stopped them! I bought the field book that you recommended (All that the Rain Promises and More), and Javier, who is just ten years old, devoured the book in one bite and has subsequently memorized every mushroom in the guide (including their Latin names). He took his passion to his grade 5 class and did a power point presentation to them on edible mushrooms and encouraged his teacher to take them out on a mushroom walk. Javier is also an artist and has since sketched many of his favourite fungi varieties.

As a family we have since gone out exploring mushrooms at least half a dozen times and every time we do, we find a new specimen that we haven't seen before. Javier and Isa name the mushrooms as they see them with the confidence of a guru! Mom, "that's an amanita muscaria, oh, just look at that beautiful witches butter, and mom, aren't these nice orange peels?" They wisely never taste any of the mushrooms that they find and even when they think they have struck gold and found an edible variety they know better to make sure someone with the expertise identifies it. But it's the feeling of 'striking gold' in the woods that has had such an impact on our family. "Mom!! Dad!! Oh my god, don't tell me, I found gypsy mushrooms, just look at this motherload!!"

Our sons eyes are now everywhere in the woods and hours pass simply by humbly looking for fungi.

This fall it has been too wet and muddy to mountain bike and it is still too early to ski, so mushroom foraging has turned into a new pastime to keep the kids outdoors.

As you and Erin said on the tour, it's the little hands that find the most amazing fungi. The kids are closer to the ground, they aren't afraid to get dirty and so their eyes are all over the mushroom world. On the tour my younger son Isa wouldn't stop bringing you the smallest of mushrooms and every time he did, you acknowledged his find with such kindness, saying, "now isn't that a beauty?". That kind of encouragement has fostered a real passion in my children and it couldn't have come without your guidance and wisdom.



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We really look forward to having the pleasure of meeting you again in the forest, here or one day on the island.

All the best,

Farha

Please see below for photos, thank-you letters, media coverage and event poster.

Completed by: Kristina Swerhun **Telephone:** 604-935-7665

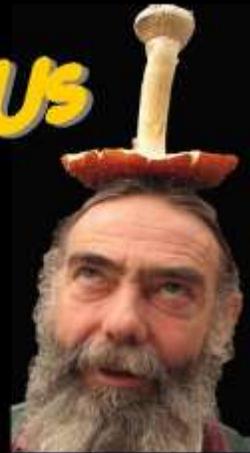
The Whistler Naturalists present

Fungus Among Us

Mushroom Festival

October 14-15, 2016

Myrtle Philip School, 6195 Lorimer Road



Talks by Gurus! (7:30 pm, Friday Night)

Truffle Dogs — Fungal Fotos — Mushy Musings
BYOM: Bring your own mushroom. Prizes for the best!

Friday 7:30pm (\$10 non-member/\$8 member)



Walks with Gurus! (8:30 am, Sat.)

Over 20 of BC's best lead walks at sites throughout Whistler. If you don't already have a ticket, come at least 15 minutes early.

Sat. 8:30 sharp till noon (\$20 non-member/\$15 member)



Gourmet Tasting!

A taste treat of wild mushroom dishes prepared by Chef Bruce Worden.

Sat. 12:30-2:00 (\$40 / \$30)

Mushroom Display

Check out the day's finds, labelled and explained by our experts. Over 100 species of mushrooms!

Saturday 2:30-4:00 (free!)



Updates: www.whistlernaturalists.ca

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Letter to the Editor, Pique Newsmagazine & Whistler Question

The Whistler Naturalists would like to thank everyone who participated in another fun Fungus Among Us Mushroom Festival.

Tons of fungi in the woods brought out an enthusiastic crowd of fungophiles for Friday talks, Saturday walks and the gourmet wild mushroom tasting. By Saturday afternoon the display tables at Myrtle Philip were filled with species of mushrooms of all shapes and sizes that impressed the hundreds of people who viewed them.

The total number of species (at least, there may be more as things shake out) from the weekend was 179. Of these, 23 have not been recorded before. As usual, we're amazed by how much diversity is in the woods, how much it changes each year, and how many new species the experts continue to find. The total number of different species of fungi now known in Whistler is almost 900.

We couldn't run the festival without our 25 fabulous mushroom gurus who gave talks, led walks, and labelled and presided over the mushroom display. Special thanks to the presenters: Luke Mikler (Fungal Fotos), Kem Luther (Look ma! No gills!), Andy MacKinnon & Erin Feldman (Mushy Musings).

Our popular gourmet wild mushroom tasting wouldn't have been possible without the great expertise and wonderful creativity of Chef Bruce Worden, Nester's Market and Milestones.

Thanks also to the amazing group of volunteers who helped out and all the folks that came out to share their enthusiasm and wonder for all things fungal.

Finally, the Whistler Naturalists would also like to thank our key sponsors: the Community Foundation of Whistler, AWARE and RMOW as well as Rocky Mountain Chocolate Factory, Arts Whistler, Pasta Lupino and Avalanche Pizza.

See you next year, as always, the weekend after Thanksgiving.

Bob Brett, Kristina Swerhun, Kathy Jenkins & Melanie Tardif
On behalf of the Whistler Naturalists



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Thank-you letters from Myrtle Philip Community School

Dear Andy and Erin,

Thank you for the visit to our grade 2/3 class on October 14. The students loved learning a bit about mushrooms and were extremely excited to go out for the walk in the pouring rain to go mushroom hunting. They had no idea so many riches were close by! I think they would have been happy to continue all day!

I had wonderful feedback from parents about all the information their children shared when they got home.

I hope you are available to come again next year and it would be nice if we could include more classes and perhaps send some information home to let the families know more about Fungus Among Us as the students would love to come next year. Thank you again for your time and hope to see you next year.

Susan Hamersley
On behalf of her class
Myrtle Philip Community School

Dear Whistler Naturalists,

On Friday, October four mycologists came to our school and took us on a fungus foray. First the scientists told us a few things, like how to pick them carefully; to reach our fingers under the bottom of the bulb; that we didn't have to pick every mushroom.

Then our class went out to look for and pick mushrooms. It was pouring rain and freezing! We had to go off the trail to find them. We learned the names of various mushrooms. We found a « copper-top » which is a big mushroom that had killed another mushroom beside it and it had turned it green. We found a tiny pink mushroom in the moss. We found sponge mushrooms. We found "poison pie", one called cortinarius. One of the scientists licked one of the mushrooms.

When we got back, we placed some mushrooms on black and white paper and left them for 4 hours. Then we lifted them up and saw the cool pattern that the "spore prints" had made.

We learned that the mushroom isn't the actual plant, it is more like a fruit and picking mushrooms doesn't harm the plant, which is under the soil.

We had fun, learned a lot, and we hope the scientists get to come back next year to share their knowledge of mushrooms with students in Whistler.

Sincerely,
Mme. Millen's Class
Myrtle Philip Community School

Pique newsmagazine October 13, 2016

NEWS » ENVIRONMENT

October 13, 2016

Mind your mushrooms during Fungus Among Us Successful event draws experts, aficionados from near and far

By Lynn Mitges

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FILE PHOTO BY JOERN ROHDE COURTESY OF WHISTLER NATURALISTS

FUN FORAGING The Whistler Naturalists 14th annual Fungus Among Us Mushroom Festival begins Oct. 13 with exploration and information about mushrooms in the Whistler area. Pictured here, fungi 'guru' Paul Kroeger with fans.

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Friday night talks



Scientists L to R Danny Miller, Oluna Ceska and Kent Brothers (Photos: James Holkko)



Scientists L to R Kem Luther, Stephanie Hirst, Ben Hircock and Daryl Thompson



Meeting for Saturday morning walks (Photos: James Holkko)



Cooking demo with Chef Bruce Worden (Photos: Kristina Swerhun)



Cooking demo with Chef Bruce Worden (Photos: Kristina Swerhun)



Saturday afternoon display (Photos: James Holkko)



Saturday afternoon display (Photos: James Holkko)