



River Raisin

WATERSHED COUNCIL

Partner · Protect · Preserve

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EXPLORING THE FUN WORLD OF AUTUMN MUSHROOMS by Alyiah Fife



As the crisp air sets in and leaves transform into a world of warm hues, autumn beckons us to immerse ourselves in nature's vibrant spectacle. Among the many delights this season offers, one activity stands out for nature enthusiasts and adventurers alike - mushroom foraging. While everyone loves hunting for the springtime morels, Autumn presents the perfect time to embark on a captivating journey in search of these elusive and fascinating fungi. So grab your basket, put on your hiking boots, and let's dive into the wonderful world of autumn mushrooms.

Venturing into the woods in search of mushrooms can be a thrilling and rewarding experience. The enchanting beauty of the autumn forest, combined with the hunt for mysterious and diverse mushroom species, creates a unique and captivating adventure. It's an opportunity to connect with nature on a deeper level, discovering hidden treasures beneath fallen leaves and among decaying logs.

While mushroom foraging can be a delightful adventure, it is crucial to prioritize safety and education. Learning to identify different mushroom species accurately is essential to avoid potential risks. Consider joining a local

mycological society or attending workshops to familiarize yourself with the basics of mushroom identification and the distinction between edible and poisonous varieties. It's always better to err on the side of caution and seek expert advice when in doubt.

Autumn offers many mushroom friendly environments. Keep an eye out for certain types of habitats that tend to be fruitful in this season. Damp, wooded areas with a mix of deciduous and evergreen trees, as fallen leaves and decaying organic matter provide a fertile ground for mushrooms to thrive. Pay attention to the presence of moss, fallen logs, and tree stumps, as these often serve as prime mushroom-growing spots. Autumn presents a wide array of mushrooms, each with its unique characteristics and flavors. Here are a few notable species often encountered during this season in your backyard:



Chanterelles are known for their golden-yellow color and delightful apricot-like aroma. They are highly sought-after edible mushrooms that thrive in the autumnal forests.

MISSION

To inspire behaviors that promote stewardship, improve water quality, and encourage public participation to protect, preserve, and enhance the River Raisin Watershed

RRWC seeks volunteers and members to achieve our mission!

Please contact us to find out how you can help with or participate in the various activities outlined in these pages.

Our success in improving water quality in the River Raisin Watershed depends on you!

Contact us by phone: (517)264-4754

Contact us by email: admin@riverraisin.org

Exploring the Fun World of Autumn Mushrooms by Alyiah Fife

(continued) *Oyster mushrooms* are known for a subtle flavor lacking the usual earthy taste of other mushrooms. They have broad or fan shaped caps that range from white to grey to tan in coloring. They can be found growing on dead or sick trees and commonly hang out on aspen or beech trees.




Honey Mushrooms are honey-colored mushrooms often growing in large clusters, feasting on decaying wood. They are known for their versatility in the kitchen and can be used in various culinary preparations.



Responsible mushroom foraging involves respecting nature and preserving the ecosystem. Here are a few guidelines to ensure your foraging practices are ethical. Only harvest mushrooms you can positively identify as safe and edible. Collect mushrooms in moderation, leaving behind some to ensure the continuity of their growth and sustenance for other creatures. Use a basket or foraging bag instead of plastic bags to allow spores to disperse and contribute to the mushroom ecosystem. Avoid damaging the environment by being mindful of your footsteps and not disturbing other flora and fauna.

- Alyiah Fife, Summer Intern

From the Executive Director's Desk with Stephen May



The River Raisin Watershed Council will be celebrating 50 years as an established non-profit that began September 13, 1974 and over the next eleven months we will be planning and preparing this historical chapter in our organization. RRWC looks forward to a full year in 2024 and celebrating our legacy.

The past year of 2023 was full of events, fairs, festivals, cleanups, nature walks and lots of volunteer participation and this Fall and thru 2024 will bring another exciting chapter to the Watershed. The RRWC has begun working on a 5 year strategic plan from a generous grant from the Erb Family Foundation. Over the next 16 months RRWC will be working with Parallel Solutions to understand RRWC's current operational system and practices. Parallel Solutions will review previous strategic or operational plan(s), recent organizational assessments, program and event plans or summaries, program and event evaluations, board-approved budgets, financial reports, fundraising data or reports, member feedback surveys, annual staff work plans, an organizational chart, job or role descriptions, operating budgets and other financial information, annual reports, bylaws and other board policies, operating procedures, existing partnership agreements, communication materials, and

representative copies of board and committee agendas and minutes.

Parallel Solutions will develop specific sets of questions for internal and external stakeholder interviews and will share the interview questions with the Executive Director and Executive Committee prior to conducting the interviews. Our consultant will ghost-write the invitations to participants which will be signed and emailed by the Executive Director and then use the online scheduling platform to schedule phone interviews. Those receiving an invitation will be able to go to a link, view available times, and select an open time and book their interview directly with Parallel Solutions. Individual interviews responses will remain confidential and Parallel Solutions will collate and synthesize responses.

Our consultant will develop a survey to be distributed to current members. This survey will be distributed via email by RRWC and will also be included in one of our newsletters. The survey will focus on gathering and understanding members' motivations for being part of our community, why the RRWC matters, their experiences with the us, and their hopes for the future.

The goal will be to receive 100 completed surveys. For this to be successful, we need participation and create awareness that this is YOUR Strategic Plan - *Partner, Protect, Preserve ... OWN IT !!!*

River Raisin Watershed Council Awarded \$39,940 Michigan Department of the Environment, Great Lakes and Energy (EGLE) Foundation Grant

The Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy's Water Resources Division announced the twenty grants totaling \$600,000 to watershed organizations supporting conservation and educational efforts related to non-point source pollution and water quality. \$39,940 of the total amount was awarded to the River Raisin Watershed Council (RRWC) to support family and adult nature exploration programs.

These programs include educational day programs and family nights for kids in grades K-12, as well as adult classes with topics including agriculture, sustainability, vermicomposting, wildlife, water quality, and rain gardens.

Nature walks along the river and paddling trips on the River Raisin will also be organized to encourage recreation of the river. The project will

help establish the RRWC as a prominent local environmental group that advocates for the connection between individuals and nature.

This 1-year award follows a previous grant from the EGLE that allowed for the expansion of the watershed council into a larger office and the purchasing of office materials. The continued support from EGLE represents a vote of confidence in the RRWC's activities and contributions to the watershed – which encompasses parts of 5 counties and the 150-mile-long waterway from its headwaters in Hillsdale County to its mouth in Monroe.

To stay up to date our nature exploration programs, visit www.riverraisin.org & follow our social media.

Lydia Lopez is the program coordinator for these classes. Contact: waterstewardship@riverraisin.org.

Farmer-Led Watershed Conservation Update

"Farmers helping farmers adopt best management practices to improve soil health, increase crop yields, reduce farm input costs, reduce nutrient loss, and improve water quality in the Western Lake Erie Basin." The mission of the Farmer-Led Watershed Conservation Group (FLG)!

This year, FLG hired Melissa Harris, a program coordinator, to augment the hard work of the organization. Keep an eye out for her in the watershed and at our events.

Check out the updated website for the FLG at waterqualityfarming.org. See our Best Management Practices (BMP) videos, see upcoming events, and stay on top of cost-sharing opportunities and grants for your operation. Connect with other farmers from Southeastern Michigan on our Facebook.

FLG would like to take a moment to thank the *Erb Family Foundation, Michigan Association of Conservation Districts, Monroe Conservation District, Lenawee Conservation District, RRWC, Washtenaw Conservation District* for their continued support in this mission!
- Meija Knafl, Outreach Coordinator



Upcoming Events & Programs

Wild Ones (ages 9 to 14)

- November 11th | **Foraging Class**
- December 1st | **Owl Prowl**
- January 13th | **Animal Tracks & Scat**
- Feb 10th | **Mammals**
- Feb 17th | **Ice Fishing**
- March 16th | **Amphibians**
- March 30th | **Rain Garden Planting**
- April 13th | **Vernal Pool Patrol**



Family Nature Fridays (ages 8 and younger)

- November 10th | **Foraging Class**
- December 1st | **Owl Prowl**
- January 12th | **Animal Tracks & Scat Class**
- Feb 9th | **Mammals Class**
- March 15th | **Amphibians**
- March 29th | **Rain Garden Planting**
- April 12th | **Vernal Pool Patrol**



Adult Nature Exploration (ages 15 and older)

- November 11th | **Foraging Class**
- December 2nd | **Owl Prowl**
- January 13th | **Animal Tracks & Scat**
- Feb 10th | **Learning Mammals**
- March 8th | **Master Rain Garden 101**
- March 30th | **Rain Garden Planting**
- April 13 | **Vernal Pool Patrol**



- January 2nd | **RRWC Summer Internship Applications Open**
- January 15th | **Poster Contest & Discover the Raisin Starts**
- April 1st | **Summer Internship Applications Close**
- April 15th | **Poster Contest & Discover the Raisin Closes**
- April 20th | **Nature Extravaganza**



EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE & STAFF

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 Chief Deputy Water Resources Commissioner
 Representative, Washtenaw County

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