

## A Blast from the Metchosin Muse's Past

Johnny Carline

The *Metchosin Muse* has now completed 30 years of publishing this community's own newspaper. Highlights of the first two decades of publication were captured in *The Best of The Muse*, volumes 1 and 2 (contact the *Muse* if you are still looking for a very modestly priced copy).

This year, to celebrate our anniversary, we decided to publish one article per month from the past decade, 2013 to 2023. Over the next eleven issues, we will publish one article from each year in succession, each chosen by a different member of the *Muse* team. This month's article is from December, 2013 and was penned by the much-admired late Councillor, Moralea Milne and titled "Zombie Ants".



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**"Let your vision be world embracing rather than confined to your own self."**

(Baha'i Writings)

For information on the Metchosin Baha'i Community please call or text:  
Mona at (250) 514-1756 / Doug at (250) 858-2053 / Bahai.org



## CLOSE TO NATURE

WITH MORALEA MILNE

### ZOMBIE ANTS

MORALEA MILNE

There are people who claim that mushrooms can save the world, and others who say they farm the world, and you can truly start to believe that fungi are the superior species when you hear about Zombie Ants. These poor hardworking ants, just trying to do their best for the colony, are the unfortunate recipients of the spores of a

that have not been recorded previously in Metchosin, and there are some that are still being examined which might be interesting new additions to the fungi of BC.

2013 is being hailed as the best year for fungi in the last fifteen; the diversity of species and the abundance has had the mushroom world swooning with pleasure, with many larders full of bursting with an excellent harvest of chanterelles and hedgehogs.



Micro BioBlitz – Yes, Metchosin had mushrooms!

Photo by Brian Domney

certain fungus. The fungus settles into the ant host body, slowly killing the ant. But just before the final ant gasp, the fungus directs the ant to climb to the top of the nearest rock, leaf or branch. There it sends out its fruiting body, the mushroom, from the skull of the ant. Now it has an elevated platform from which to release its spores and send them out into the world. Ghoulish as that sounds, it might explain Toronto Mayor Rob Ford's erratic behaviour.

It was Metchosin's great good fortune to have the entertaining Britt Bunyard, a world-renowned mycologist (mushroom expert) and editor of *Fungi Magazine*, give a fascinating presentation on the Weir, Weird, Weird World of Mushrooms at the November Talk and Walk. If you want a topic that appeals to a wide range of Metchosin residents, mushrooms were it! This was the eighth annual mushroom presentation and it rivals the infamous Sasquatch Talk (no Walk) for the number of interested people who attended (around ninety in both cases). It's a testament to the allure of fungi to see that two-thirds of the attendees were under the age of thirty.

This year we started our first MycoBlitz, a continuation of the spring BioBlitz that has seen us record approximately 1,200 species within Metchosin's borders. A MycoBlitz is an inventory of all the fungi species that can be found during a twenty-four hour period. About eighty keen mushroomers met with a number of experts to explore the Van der Meer property, Camp Thunderbird and Pearson College. The sorting and recording of the mushrooms was held at the Pearson College cafeteria (thanks Pearson College!) and many students were able to join in the excitement of the event. Although the final count is yet to be determined (mushrooms can be hard to identify), the estimate is an additional 200 species that can be added to the bioinventory. Certainly, a number of species were found



These mushrooms are a stunning pink - oh for colour printing! Photo by Moralea Milne

Thanks to the District of Metchosin, Pearson College, Metchosin Foundation, Camp Thunderbird, Camosun College, Andy MacKinnon, Kem Luther, Adolf and Oluna Ceska and Britt Bunyard for making the MycoBlitz a huge success. When completed, a list of the fungi species recorded from the MycoBlitz will be found at [metchosinbiodiversity.com](http://metchosinbiodiversity.com)

Merry Christmas to all our natural history aficionados! And may Santa lead you to find the rare Christmas Naucoria mushroom (only found on ancient and somewhat rotten arbutus trees).

