

# Outdoors

## Pamelia Creek and mushrooms



A fairy helmet found along the Pamela Creek Trail in the Mt. Jefferson Wilderness. PHOTOS BY BOBBIE SNEAD / SPECIAL TO THE STATESMAN JOURNAL

### Hunting for treasures along the Pamela Creek Trail

**Bobbie Snead**  
Special to Salem Statesman Journal  
USA TODAY NETWORK

Mushrooms are enchanting. Like characters from a children's storybook, they capture the imagination. When I was 4, I picked a mushroom in the woods and brought it to my mother. She explained what it was and then solemnly told me never to disturb mushrooms because forest elves use them for shelter in a rainstorm. Mom was clever. By imbuing mushrooms with the magic of the wee folk, she hoped to keep her curious child from picking something I shouldn't. It worked. I have followed her advice ever since.

The science of mushrooms is just as captivating as the childhood enchantment. Fungi play a critical role in the nutrient cycle of a forest and form an important ecological bond with trees that enhances growth. A great place to experience both the magic and science of mushrooms is on the Pamela Trail in the Mt. Jefferson Wilderness.

A soft drizzle falls from low clouds as I start up the trail, hiking permit in hand. The muddy path leads me into a hushed old growth forest. Ancient



A fairy helmet found along the Pamela Creek Trail in the Mt. Jefferson Wilderness.

Douglas fir trees bear silent witness to Pamela Creek as it splashes and sings its way down the valley. One of six streams that flow directly off the steep western slopes of Mt. Jefferson, this creek is the only one that has a trail tracing its course all the way to its high-country source. Other trails on Jeff's west side travel high above their streams. Stream and trail travel side by side in this valley.

Walking past a fallen tree, I spy what looks like a handful of lavender Easter eggs on the mossy forest floor. A second look reveals that they are actually freshly sprouted mushrooms the color of li-

#### If you go

**Directions:** From Detroit, drive east on Highway 22 for 12 miles and turn left on Pamela Rd. 2246. Drive 3.6 miles to the trailhead at the end of the road.

**Length:** 4.4 miles round trip

**Duration:** 2.5 hours

**Elevation gain:** 800 feet

**Age range:** suitable for children 6 years old and up

absorbs extra water and minerals from the soil and shares them with the tree via the roots. In return, the tree provides photosynthesized sugar as sustenance for the fungus. Each organism helps its partner. Without each other, fungus and tree would struggle to survive. A tree in this forest could have more than a dozen fungal partners. Nutrients can even travel from one tree to another through this underground network. I look up to a giant Douglas fir and down to the purple webcap at its feet. The rich complexity of the forest is astonishing.

Moving on, I soon find a bizarre fungus under a western hemlock tree. Blood red droplets ooze from a lumpy white mass. It's a bleeding hydrellum (*Hydrellum peckii*). Conditions have to be just right for these beads of red liquid to appear. After a heavy rain the super saturated soil forces water into the hydrellum's roots. Pressure slowly builds in the body of the fungus until liquid exudes from the surface pores. Scientists call this process guttation. The blood red coloring comes from a pigment within the fungus. The hydrellum's macabre looks are intensified by the tiny tooth-like structures hanging from its underside. Although sinister in appearance, the hydrellum benefits the surrounding trees just like the webcaps. I take several photos and continue on.

The misty serenity of the forest belies the fact that it has been the scene of violent change. Boulders wedged against tree trunks marked by a four-foot mud line tell the story of a thunderous debris

lacs. They are called gassy webcaps (*Cortinarius traganus*), an unfortunate name for these beauties.

I kneel next to one to look closely. It stands about 3 inches tall. The lustrous round cap is silky smooth. Using a hand mirror, I examine the cap's underside. The remains of a fragile cobwebby veil cover thin flap-like gills. These gills bear the mushroom's primitive seeds, called spores. The veil protects the gills while they develop and then breaks as the webcap grows. When the time is right the gills will release the spores for the wind to disperse, spawning the next crop of webcaps.

Gassy webcaps add more than color to the forest. They are an integral part of the forest's health. Each fungus grows from tiny rootlets in the soil. These thin hair-like filaments form part of a huge web of gauzy roots that can spread great distances underground. Some of these tiny threads wrap themselves around tree roots and form a bond that benefits both tree and fungus. The mushroom

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## Learn about the fungus among us at show



**Fishing**  
Henry Miller  
Guest columnist

I've got boodles of pictures of a wild and weird assortment of mushrooms and other fungus that I've spotted over the years during outdoor rambles, ambles and scrambles in Oregon.

Out of the dozens and dozens of weird, wild, colorful and drab mushrooms, bracket fungus and other curiosities, though, there are only two that I feel confident enough to cook up and shove into my pie hole.

Those are golden chanterelles and morels.

Otherwise, I can't tell a truffle from a petrified elk turd (don't ask how I know this).

Which is somewhat pathetic, when you think about all the possibilities out there.

But after writing a story a couple of decades ago about some Asian refugees who cooked and ate mushrooms that looked just like their favorites back home, with lethal and near-fatal consequences, the first rule of journalism applies equally to wild mushrooms.



A fungal "flower" grows on a downed log in the Coast Range. HENRY MILLER / SPECIAL TO THE STATESMAN JOURNAL

"When in doubt, leave it out." There's a cure for easing your fungal fears, though.

The Willamette Valley Mushroom Society will hold its fourth annual Mushroom Show, this edition in partnership with the Sustainable Living Center, from noon to 4 p.m. on Nov. 17 in Painters Hall, 3911 Village Center Drive SE.

To get there, go south on Fairview Industrial Drive SE at the light on Madrona Avenue SE, then right on Strong Road SE and another right on Village Center Drive SE to the hall.

Admission is free. It's a change of venue from the three-time show site at the Salem Public Library, which is unavailable because of a rolling shutdown for renovation.

The 2018 show drew 500 attendees, the "biggest event ever," said Autumn Anglin, the show committee chair and club treasurer.

In the interests of full disclosure, I am a member of the society, one of the, ahem, less-active participants. One might say semi-comatose, but with aspirations of greater involvement.

I digress. Society members will be scrambling over hill and dale the day before the event collecting fungal fascinations for the show displays.

And you can bring your own contributions, Anglin said. There will be a mushroom-identification table for walk-in, make that carry-in, curiosities.

There will be edible mushroom samples, activities for families and kids such as spore-printing and projection-microscopic mushroom examination, along with presentations about getting into the joys and rewards of free-range 'shrooming.

Topics are "Mushroom Hunting for Beginners" at 12:15 and 2:15 p.m. as well

"Mushrooms 101" at 1:15 and 3:15 p.m.

"The goal is to get people interested in mushrooms," Anglin said about sharing the members' passion. "We just love wild mushrooms."

Hey, works for me. And trust me on this one, you can't get anything past the members.

In a feeble version of "stump the stars," I emailed a photo of a weird, alien-looking fungus that 'shrooming buddy Phil and I found during a Nov. 2 outing on a long-disused logging road near Pedee.

Phil knew of it as an "Elfin Saddle." Society ID guru Henry Young was a little more, shall we say, precise: "The mushroom is *Helvella vespertina* (misapplied name is *H. lacunosa* a similar European species). The 'cap' is typically black but this one is being parasitized by *Hypomyces cervinigenus*, another fungus."

Aha! Just as I suspected ... NOT. Seriously, you need to meet these people.

Although you just might catch a fungal (hunting) infection.

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