

What to Expect on a PSMS Field Trip

New PSMS members (welcome to you!) or infrequent field trip attendees may have varying expectations about our field trips. Although unexpected events can and do occur, the following represents how things generally happen at our trips. First, there is a lot of good information on our website, so be sure to read that. The website also has a link to a page called “Harvesting Rules”. It would be good to review that page in advance, relative to the locale where the field trip will take place. You will find information about permit requirements if any, harvest limits, etc.

Unless specified otherwise, no reservations are necessary for any trip. ALL Field trips are for members ONLY and considered a member benefit.

Members generally arrive at the trip site between 8AM and 9AM. We have single trip host volunteers (we always need more of these) who come early, set out breakfast items and make coffee. Field Trip chair and ID chair Brian Luther often makes a fire and that first hour of the day is very pleasant and relaxing. At 9:00AM Brian gives a short talk in which he goes over collecting gear, thanks the trip hosts, and sets the time for pot luck. Then one of us on the Field Trip Safety Committee gives a short safety talk and organizes beginners into guided groups, if they want a guided experience. We have some experienced members who are willing to forego their own hunting (thank them) to lead a group of beginners into the woods. There are usually more members wanting a guided group than we have guides to take them out. The priority will go to those who are new and have never had a guided experience. Arriving late guarantees you won't be going out with a guide. (In that case try to organize a small group of your own since it's safer to go into the woods in a group compared to individually.)

This Spring in 2022, we will sign up new members electronically for guided groups during the week before the field trip. We may also have a guided group sign-up sheet set out early in the day if the online guided groups do not fill up; first come, first served. **Only if** all the beginners who want a guided group experience have been accommodated in groups, will we then

have the ability to offer spots in the groups to those with some experience. The guided groups will typically be out for 2.5 to 3 hours, sometimes driving from the trip site and sometimes walking. No one guide is better than another. No one has a stash of secret spots that they will reveal to you. We are just experienced mushroomers willing to take you out and help you as best we can. We can talk about what we hope to find, the correct habitat, hunting strategies, etc. These trips are planned a year in advance and we have no idea about rainfall which is a major factor in the timing of mushroom fruiting. So there is NO GUARANTEE of finding edible mushrooms. What do we guarantee? We'll promise some mushroom education and an enjoyable social experience.

When members bring their mushroom collections back to the shelter which serves as our base of operations, then the specimens can be identified and discussed. Time allowing, we may be able to provide written ID tags so members can advance their learning and not have to rely on memory for the name of that species Brian identified an hour ago. Those who wish to participate can join the post field trip potluck in the early afternoon. Remember to bring a contribution! The early timing of the dinner allows members to enjoy the socializing and the food and still get home at a reasonable hour. Most field trips are close enough to the Seattle area that the whole experience can be had in one day. Some trips however are pretty far for a one day trip, and Brian usually has at least one weekend trip per season. Members camp or sleep in their RVs. The field trip schedule comes out to members only, all at once, as soon as it has been finalized, allowing you to take note of locations and timing and decide which trips you might want to attend.

So having a safe and enjoyable mushroom hunting experience means both sides have responsibilities. We'll make some guides available, do our best to get you into and out of the woods safely, educate you regarding correct mushroom habitat (so you can later hunt successfully on your own) and discuss hunting strategies. Back at the shelter, we'll also identify the specimens you collect.

So what are your responsibilities?

1. Read the material we write about the field trips. We went to some trouble to write it.
2. Dress appropriately for the weather. Even if it's not raining you may be walking through wet brush.
3. Bring safety gear (google "the ten essentials") and water. Navigation gear is very helpful (compass, GPS) as are walkie talkies and safety whistles.
4. If you want to go out in a guided group, you must sign up ahead of time (See the April 2022 Sporeprints page 3), bring a whistle, as you will not be permitted into a PSMS group without one. PSMS no longer hands out whistles. **Guided field trips are for new members! Please sign up to do this one time only, as there are limited guides for this!**
5. Bring a basket or bucket or some container in which to carry mushrooms and a knife to cut them with.
6. Guides have their hands full trying to manage groups in the woods. Please follow your guide's instructions. If you would rather not do that, then please don't sign up for a guided group.
7. Groups often split up in the woods and some members stray so far away that they get separated from their group leader. We'll do our best to get you into the woods and back out again safely but ultimately it's YOUR responsibility to know where you are and to be able to get yourself safely back.

Other clubs have "field trips" but those are often more "bare bones" than ours. What sets us apart is our emphasis on mushroom education and an enjoyable social experience which is enhanced if you stay for the socializing after the event.

Welcome!

Wren Hudgins
Co-Chair, Field Trip Safety Committee