

LOOK OUT FOR MUSHROOMS

Here are some ways to put the “fun” in fungus!

MUSHROOM SAFARI

Look! Right there—peeking out from some dead leaves—it’s a fungus called a mushroom! Come on, let’s creep up slowly and quietly, so it doesn’t get away!

OK, so you don’t really have to sneak up on mushrooms to get a peek at them. But they still can get away: Many kinds of mushrooms disappear after only a few days. So get out there and start hunting before you miss them!

When to Look

Depending on what part of the country you live in, you might see mushrooms in any season. But fall is the best time for finding the most. Try hunting a few days after a good rain.

What to Take

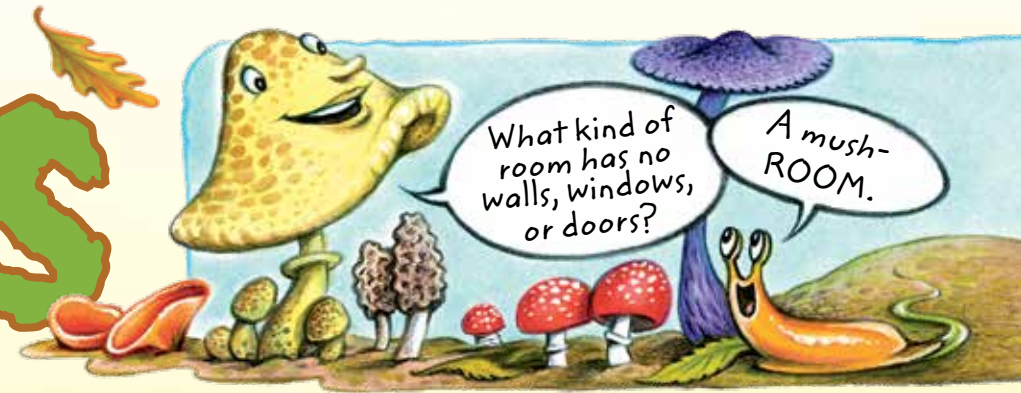
Some mushrooms are tiny, so you might want to take a magnifying glass to really study them. To be safe, don’t pick or even touch any mushrooms you find, since some kinds are poisonous.

You could carry a notebook and pencil to make sketches of mushrooms. Or take a camera to snap some great ‘shroom shots. For the most interesting pictures, try to hold the camera right at the mushroom’s level. That may mean lying on your stomach to take a picture, so dress to get dirty!

Where to Look

You can find mushrooms in many places, such as woods, meadows, pastures, or maybe even your own backyard.

BY KATHY KRANKING



SPY ON SPORES

Spores are what mushrooms spread to make more mushrooms. Tiny and seed-like, a spore is too small to see without a microscope. But millions of spores together look like dust. You can see them by making a spore print.

Here’s how:

What You Need

- whole portobello mushroom from the grocery store
- light-colored sheet of paper
- wide drinking glass or bowl
- can of hairspray or spray fixative from an art supply store

What You Do

1. Remove the stem from the mushroom cap.
2. Place the cap on the piece of paper with the underside facing down. That’s where the gills are, and the spores fall out from between the gills.
3. Cover the mushroom cap with the glass or bowl.
4. Leave it covered for 24 hours. Don’t peek!

5. When time is up, carefully remove the cover and mushroom cap to see your spore print.

6. Spray the print with the hairspray or fixative to keep the spores in place. Hang up your print for everyone to see. If you really want to get creative, you can make a picture using the spore print. Draw petals around it to make a flower; give it a head, antennas, and legs to make a bug; or come up with ideas of your own. You can even use several spore prints together to make a scene. 🐛

Check around the bases of trees, on tree trunks, under dead leaves, beneath shrubs, on old rotting logs and stumps, and in lawns and gardens.

Once you find one mushroom, chances are you’ll find more. Then you can “capture” them in drawings or photos.

Happy hunting!

Rangers: We’d love to see your mushroom photos and drawings. Send them to Ranger Rick; 11100 Wildlife Center Dr.; Reston, VA 20190-5362; E-mail: rick@nwf.org —R.R.

ART BY DEBBIE PALEN

