



Natural History Field Seminars, Workshops, and Courses at Eagle Hill on the Eastern Maine Coast

Natural History of Fungi and Slime Molds

August 5 - 11, 2012

Although the term “fungus” or “fungi” has at least some meaning to the average person, few people know very much about these widely distributed and ecologically very important organisms. Fungi are abundant in nature, but they are often overlooked, usually underappreciated, and sometimes misunderstood. Their sudden appearance and disappearance, their frequent association with decaying organic matter, their vivid colors, fantastic shapes, and in some instances their poisonous properties, often cause fungi to be regarded as objects of mystery and sometimes even to be associated with the supernatural. The fungus-like myxomycetes (also called plasmodial slime molds) are present in many of the same types of ecological situations as fungi but belong to an entirely different taxonomic group. Although small (most examples are no more than 1-2 mm tall), the fruiting bodies produced by these truly fascinating but relatively little-known organisms are among the most beautiful miniature objects found in nature. The purpose of this seminar is to provide the information needed to develop a better understanding of the biology, taxonomy, and ecology of fungi and myxomycetes, with particular emphasis placed on those species associated with forest ecosystems. This seminar will benefit university students, amateur mycologists, field biologists, and researchers who are interested in learning new skills in studying these two groups of organisms.

Dr. Steven L. Stephenson (slsteph@uark.edu) is a research professor at the University of Arkansas in Fayetteville, Arkansas. He received his Ph.D. in 1977 from Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University. His research interests center on the distribution and ecology of fungi and myxomycetes in terrestrial ecosystems, and he has collected and studied these organisms on all seven continents and from the tropics to high-latitude regions of both hemispheres. He is the author of “Myxomycetes: a Handbook of Slime Molds” (Timber Press), “Myxomycetes of New Zealand” (Fungal Diversity Press), and “The Kingdom Fungi” (Timber Press).

