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MORELS AND THEIR ASSOCIATES

by

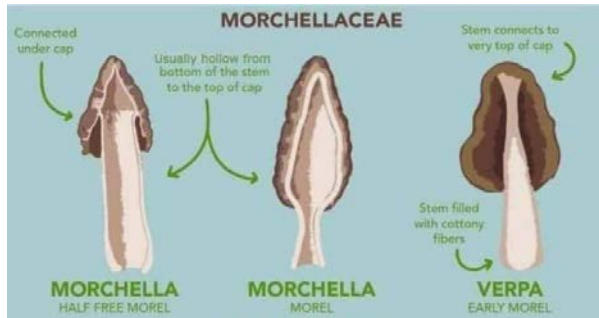
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GRNA Naturalist



As I make my way into the woods one early May day, I'm searching for the elusive morel mushrooms, delicious edibles. It's just rained, a hazy sun peers through the not-fully-emerged leaves, and a pleasant breeze drifts through the branches. I notice the absence of mosquitos and black flies that would plague me on a warmer, later date. Perfect for a morel search! I am distracted by bird song high in the maples. It sounds like a Robin but has a different warble. A flash of bright pink tells me it's a Rose-breasted Grosbeak singing to attract his streaky brown female.

As I walk through the leafy underbrush, a strong garlicky fragrance rises to my nostrils. Looking around, I see the twin leaves of the wild leeks, or ramps, clustered under my feet. And there are lilac-striped spring beauties and golden trout lilies covering the forest floor. But I forget the reason I'm here – to find morels. I'd better pay attention to where I'm walking.

I've done a bit of research before heading out. Fungi are grouped by where they bear their spores. We are most familiar with the gilled fungi, but I learned that morels are in a group of fungi that carry their spores in a vase-like structure called an ascus, hence the scientific classification in Greek, ascomycete (sac fungus). Included in this group are the morels, the scarlet caps, and the yeasts.



It is best to learn the scientific terms for mushrooms; for instance, what we call "true" morels are in the genus *Morchella*. The species in the *Verpa* genus and *Gyromitra* genus are lumped into the "false" morels even though they have very different characteristics.



There are three different fungi in the genus *Morchella*. All mushrooms in this group are deeply pitted and have hollow stems and caps.

Morchella esculenta or edible morel is the honey-colored morel, usually found in deciduous woods, under dead elms (if there are any left), or around old, unsprayed apple trees.

Morchella elata or black morel is found in the same habitat but occurs earlier in the season. The cap appears more pointed; the stem is pale.



Morchella americana or gray morel occurs in drier, even gravelly habitats. It is pale gray with darker pits.

NOW, we come to the ones that you absolutely must know. These are the ones that are commonly identified as false morels.

Verpa bohemica, is known commonly as a half-free, cap, early, or false morel. It is found early in the season. The cap sits on top of the stalk-like a half-open umbrella. When cut lengthwise, the stem, rather than being hollow, is stuffed with white cottony fibers.

Gyromitra species are called brain, beefsteak, or false morels. These should NOT be eaten. The descriptive name, brain, is because the cap is wrinkled, not pitted, and rests on top of the stem and wrinkles down around it, much as the brain sits on the spinal cord. When cut in half, the

entire cut surface consists of many folds and the stem is indistinct.

If you are a novice morel hunter, sign up with an experienced "mushroomer" in your area. There are also mushroom ID websites, but it's best to begin by going into the woods with an experienced guide. Happy morelling! And if you don't find any, keep trying during May, and enjoy the bird songs, the wildflowers, and the warm breezes.

CORRECTION TO APRIL IN OTTER NEWS

In the article, Good Earth...Every Day, the quote, "Of all the paths you take in life, make sure a few of them are dirt" was attributed to John Muir. Readers wrote to inform us that, in fact, there is no record of John Muir ever making this statement, though it is often attributed to him.

According to the Sierra Club website

The statement is not "remotely like anything that John Muir would have said or written, and a thorough electronic search of his published and unpublished works reveals no such statement ... One possibility for such misquotes are tourist shops or websites where T-Shirts, mugs, water bottles, or wooden signs are for sale with actual Muir quotes, accompanied by similar items with statements like these without an author identified. Visitors apparently mistake the fact that such a written sentiment in close physical proximity to items with actual Muir quotes - which may or may not be attributed to Muir on the items themselves - is a reason to believe the sentiment is from John Muir. Don't make that mistake!"

Our sincere apologies to Mr. Muir for putting words in his mouth, but we stand by the statement, nevertheless. The inclusion of dirt paths in one's life can never be a bad choice.



Thank you to the Dockside for a wonderful evening on Tuesday, May 3. The weather kept us inside, but the room was filled with warm, sunny faces. We had a good turnout, and it was so nice to see so many friends familiar to us and to meet some new folks as well. Of course, we also have to thank all of you who turned out to support GRNA by enjoying food

and drinks! We don't have the final numbers yet, but we will let you know as soon as we have them.

IT'S TIME FOR GRNA'S ANNUAL NATIVE PLANT SALE

Pre-order garden kits now
by clicking here

or purchase single species
quarts at the event at GRNA
on Saturday, June 4th from
10:00 am - 1:00 pm



PROGRAMS ON THE HORIZON

Summer is just around the corner, and you can tell by the number of programs we have to offer, starting now.

Weekly through the summer



Blooms & Birds: Wildflower Walk

Every Tuesday beginning May 3

10:00 am - 12:00 pm

Donations appreciated. No pre-registration is necessary.

Go for a relaxing stroll on the trails with GRNA docents Julie Hurd and Phil Jarvi each week to find and identify the beautiful and unique wildflowers at Grass River. Along the way, we will listen and look for

the birds that call Grass River home.

Naturalist on the Trail

Every Friday this summer, beginning June 3



10:30 am – 1:30 pm

Every Friday this summer a naturalist will be stationed outdoors on our trail system, offering a new mobile mini-program each week. Stop into the Center to find out where the naturalist is that day, or go find them on the trail! You can drop in any time during the 3-hour window of the program. For all ages! Donations

welcome.

Programs Through the End of May and Beginning of June



Garlic Mustard Pull

Friday, May 20

9:30 am

Come help GRNA caretake one of its outlying parcels by pulling garlic mustard, an invasive plant. No prior experience is necessary; everyone will be briefed on the day of the event on the particulars of how to identify and remove this weed. We will meet at the outlying parcel, which is immediately east of 7891

Green St, Bellaire (along the south shore of Clam Lake). Carpooling is encouraged to reduce the number of cars parked along this narrow residential street. Bring gardening gloves if you'd like them, though they're not necessary. Depending on the number of people pulling, the event should last 1.5 - 3 hours. Please RSVP to Emily at emily@grassriver.org



Birding by Ear

Saturday, May 21

8:00 am - 10:00 am

\$5 per person

The birds are singing but may be difficult to see this time of year as the trees start to leaf out. Learn to ID birds by their songs and go for a birding walk. Grass River is a birding hotspot and a great place to learn and appreciate your birds. [Register here.](#)

Spring Stewardship Day

Saturday, May 21

9:00 am - 12:00 pm



As spring rains are falling and flower buds begin emerging, it is time to join in the spring cleaning at GRNA! Trail grooming, garden weeding, and window shining are a few of the many tasks for freshening up our grounds and Center in preparation for summer. No experience is necessary, just a pair of gloves, a "spring" in your step, and an open spirit. Pre-registration is encouraged - email Brian at stewardship@grassriver.org.



Poetry Discovery Program: Exploring Connections to Nature

Sunday, May 22

1:00 pm – 3:00 pm

\$5 per person

Join author and poet Steven Veatch for an afternoon where we set aside time to interact with nature and poetry during a walk in the woods. While enjoying the beauty of the Grass River Natural Area on a relaxing hike, you will learn the basics of writing a poem about nature, make deep observations, and then translate the experience into words as you create your own poem. Open to all ages and experience levels. Don't miss this program! Meet at the visitor center and be prepared to go on a hike (approximately one mile) and have lots of fun. Bring a notebook, a pen or pencil. [Register here.](#)



Spring Sketching & Watercolor

Saturday, May 28

1:00 pm – 3:00 pm

\$10 per person

Find inspiration as you walk a Grass River Natural Area trail, then return to the Grass River Center to create a painting using a variety of watercolor media. [Register here.](#)

Wild Orchids and Other Rare Plants

Friday, June 10

10:00 am - 12:00 pm

\$10 per person, must pre-register

Join Education Director James Dake in an exclusive presentation and off-trail



expedition to see rare orchids and other amazing plants, like carnivorous pitcher plants and sundews, in lesser-known areas of GRNA. Adults only. Must be able to hike on uneven and wet/muddy terrain. Wearing muck boots is highly recommended, as the places we go will be very wet. This program meets at the Grass River Center. [Register here.](#)



***Kayak Grass River
Monday, June 13
9:30 am - 12:00 pm
\$45 per person -
includes tour,
kayak, PFD, and
paddle for each***

participant

There is no better way to experience Grass River than by paddling its calm waters and enjoying its unique wildlife! On these morning guided tours, visitors explore Grass River by kayak and find out about GRNA's conservation efforts, wetland plants, and wildlife. **Adults Only. Limited to small groups, must pre-register.** Call GRNA to register: 231-492-8793, or email james@grassriver.org. This program meets at the Grass River Center and then walks to the dock to launch kayaks. Kayaks and paddles are provided and ready for you at the dock.



***Art on Thursdays
Thursday, June 16
1:00 pm - 2:30 pm***

\$10 per person, supplies included

On select Thursdays this summer, join a naturalist for a recurring art program outdoors! We will explore painting, sketching, journaling, clay, and more!

Classes at GRNA through NMC are also available:

Thursday, June 2, Wetland Wildflowers

Friday, June 24, Sedges of Northern Michigan

[For more information and registration - click here.](#)

GRASS RIVER CENTER HOURS

10:00 am - 4:00 pm, 7 days per week

Center closed Monday, May 30 for Memorial Day - Trails open dawn to dusk

GRNA HAS A NEW GARDEN

GRNA's Land and Facilities Steward, Brian Thelen, and an army of volunteers dismantled what had once been a garden out near our entrance. Then in May, they laid out a new garden under the sign at the road. They moved soil and boulders from the previous location and got the area ready for new plantings. Thank you to everyone who helped make this possible. We are excited to watch it develop into a beautiful new feature that welcomes our visitors to GRNA.



DOES YOUR T-SHIRT DRAWER NEED A REFRESH?

Purchase a shirt to brighten your look and GRNA benefits



Choose from any of the logos above, printed on a variety of styles, colors, & sizes from youth to adult. Order online by clicking on this box. A portion of the sale comes back to GRNA as a donation.

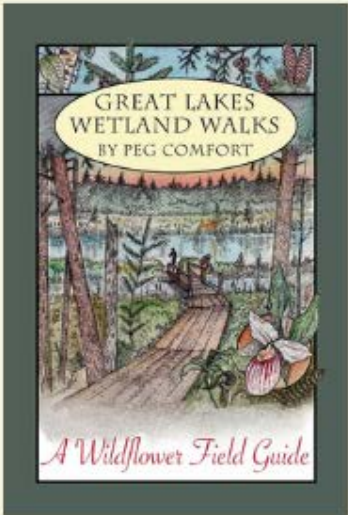
**The 2nd Edition of
Grass River Natural Area's
FIELD GUIDE
to Northwest Michigan
is now available.**



This guide is written and compiled by GRNA Education Director James Dake. It features several new and expanded sections and a new Foreword by Executive Director Jenn Wright.

Cost is \$18.87 plus tax

Order online by clicking on this box or available at the Grass River Center Gift Shop



This beautiful and informative book is available online and in the Grass River Center Gift Shop.

It is perfect for hikers, gardeners, and nature enthusiasts.

Artistic illustrations and photographs add to the book's appeal.

[Click here to order](#)

Grass River Natural Area is a nonprofit organization that has flourished for fifty-two years because of the generous support of people who value our mission "to manage the Grass River Natural Area, conserve and protect its watershed, and provide opportunities that increase knowledge, appreciation, and community-wide stewardship of the natural environment".

If you believe in our mission and want to help us fulfill it for many years to come, please click on the Donate button below. Your support is greatly appreciated.

DONATE



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