

## Meetings with Remarkable Mushrooms: Forays with Fungi across Hemispheres

**Alison Pouliot**

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*Meetings with Remarkable Mushrooms* is a delightful exploration of an often-overlooked aspect of the natural world: the fungi that are essential to the health of the planet.

Alison Pouliot contends that fungi are often misunderstood or even maligned; many people view them as threats to be managed or destroyed rather than as beneficial organisms. Advocating for a “fungal awakening,” her book portrays passionate, talented mycologists who study the complexity and intricacy of interactions between fungi and other species. It emphasizes the multigenerational knowledge of Indigenous people as well as brilliant women scientists who are working to preserve and restore fungal networks and habitats.

This engaging, informative book considers mushroom species found in a variety of ecosystems, including the rain forests of the Pacific Northwest, the lichen-scapes of Iceland, and the eucalypt forests of the Australian bush. Its descriptions evoke the distinct colors, shapes, smells, and textures of dozens of fungi, including edible species like truffles and golden chanterelles and feared species like poison fire coral palavers. Also included are fungal “renegades,” such as bioluminescent ghost fungi and otherworldly fungi that parasitize beetles and ants. There are crucial insights into fungal life cycles and the role of mycorrhizal networks in forest health and soil stability, as well as the impact of climate change.

Subtle humor enlivens the prose, such as when Pouliot notes that she felt “underdressed” at a mushroom show after watching a person wearing a morel costume “wobble precariously” down the sidewalk or describes her surprising rental car for a Seattle mushrooming trip, a Dodge “with the clearance of a porcupine.” Sixteen stunning color plates illustrate extraordinary examples of fungi.

Conveying an impassioned message for conservation and awareness, *Meetings with Remarkable Mushrooms* is a compelling, enlightening look at lowly but remarkable fungi that are often hidden in the shadows.

KRISTEN RABE (September / October 2023)

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