



Many, Many Mushrooms

Story and photos by Ronald Stine

“This is the last day of our *Nature Friend* bird contest; shall we go out again this afternoon?”

“Is it still raining?” Lily asked.

“Just dripping a bit,” I replied, “and I hear some birds singing. Let’s try it!”

So the seven of us set off down the trail into the woods.

“Can we go to the pond and the clearing?” asked Thomas.

“I suppose so. Let’s go to the pond first.” I said as we crossed the bridge.

“Hey! Look at these big red mushrooms,” exclaimed Kimberly. “Get a picture!”

Going a few feet farther, someone said, “Look at these

yellow ones. They’re funny; get a picture of them, too!”

Andrew announced, “There’s a Scarlet Tanager in this tree.” (At least someone was doing what they were supposed to be doing.)

I heard, “Where? Oh, I see it, too.”

I glanced at the tree a little but was suddenly more interested in the ground. I pointed and said, “Look at these strange mushrooms, and over there and there. I have never seen so many kinds of mushrooms before. It must be from all the rain and humidity—we’ve had over twenty inches of rain in the last four weeks. And it’s starting to rain now.”

“Oh well, it’s not much,” Lily stated energetically.

“Let’s keep going.”

So we did, and our bird walk turned into a mushroom walk. We saw many, many mushrooms and lichens, most of which we had never seen before.

Rose exclaimed, “I did not know mushrooms could





come in so many different colors: red, pink, yellow, orange, green, brown, black, gray, white, purple. This is amazing!”

We were truly amazed at the variety—some dainty umbrellas with very fine stems, others very stout with ball-shaped bottoms for support. One looked like a corn fritter, some looked like pancakes, a few looked like the top of a meringue pie. Two were John Deere yellow, and one looked like an ice cream cone with nuts sprinkled on top. A number of them were very nicely shaped; others were very unappetizing, reminiscent of something the dog brought up. Some even looked like coral.

We took a lot of close-up photos, usually one view from the top and a second view from the side at ground level. The side views were often the most interesting—revealing bumps, balls, veins, holes, and skirts, and showing the thickness of the stem and top, details that often could not be seen from a standing position.

I think we all had our favorites. Mine was the purple one similar to coral, “Violet Branched Coral.” My wife’s were the dainty pink umbrella type,

“*Marasmius Pulcherripes*.”

Every time we went on a mushroom walk, we discovered and photographed new varieties not seen on other walks. We ordered two mushrooms guide books and tried to identify as many as we could, organizing the photos in a book, labeled with their names and any other interesting facts about them.

(One very ugly one is used in some countries to flavor candy.) We were amazed at the variety, and sometimes, beauty God has placed in the lowly mushroom.

We raise a lot of fruit, and “fungus” is a bad word to someone with an orchard and berry patches. But after our “mushroom outings,” I suppose some types of fungus are OK after all.

