

## SOME MORE RECORDS OF FUNGI USED AS FOOD BY ANIMALS IN AUSTRALIA

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Cleland (1934) detailed numerous examples of Australian animals utilising fungi as food: marsupials such as wallabies and bandicoots; introduced mammals such as rabbits and pigs; molluscs such as slugs and snails; and a wide variety of insects. Considerable knowledge has been gathered since then. Strahan (1983) listed a number of small marsupials such as bilbies (*Macrotis spp.*), potoroos (*Potorous spp.*) and bettongs (*Bettongia spp.*) which all make extensive use of fungi in their diets. Two papers in volume 110 of the *Victorian Naturalist* (1993) also described the use of fungi as food by small marsupials. The author has observed several instances where fungi have been used for food where the fungus may not have been previously recorded or where animals not generally associated with fungal foods have been observed feeding upon fungi. All records are from the mountainous, often rainforested area of South East Queensland.

A very common agaric in Eastern Australian rainforests from Northern New South Wales and into tropical Queensland is the pantropical species *Filoboletus manipularis* which forms large clusters on rotting logs. The species is especially plentiful in the Bunya Mountains National Park in South East Queensland where it may form fruiting bodies over several metres of a fallen log. At least the caps of this species may be used as food by one of the small marsupials within the park: a 2-3 metre length of fruiting bodies was observed intact one afternoon while only the stalks were left the following morning. No slug or snail trails were seen. Unfortunately, the identity of the marsupial is not known, but the position of the fruiting bodies suggested bettongs or bandicoots rather than the scrub wallabies found in the area.

Two other records are of considerable interest. In the Lamington National Park are found numbers of the extremely large, black skink *Egernia major*, locally known as a 'land mullet'. The skinks reach lengths of 40-60 cm and are reasonably common in tree fall clearings in the rainforest where they take advantage of the warmer, sunnier conditions. Land mullets also move into the drier eucalypt woodlands and forests at the rainforest margins and on several occasions have been observed feeding on fungi. Mr Barry Davies of Binna Burra Tourist Lodge was able to secure a specimen of the fungus being eaten and examination has shown it to be a species of *Russula*. [Good herbarium material has been preserved.] Unfortunately, no description of the species was made (except that it was mostly white) so that its exact identity remains unknown.

A second case of fungi being utilised by reptiles also concerns a skink, the common 'blue tongued lizard' *Tiliqua scincoides*. Anecdotal evidence from an eyewitness provided strong indications that this species was observed eating a fungus. Unfortunately, neither the material was collected nor was a suitable description made available by the observer.

During the wet season, the luminescent *Omphalotus nidiformis* (= *Pleurotus nidiformis* in previous literature) is very common in the Lamington Plateau region, where it may be found in both rainforests and eucalypt woodland or forest. The species is quite toxic to humans and causes strong emesis in about 30 minutes. The species has a distinctive, strong (but not particularly unpleasant) fungousy smell. During the day, the fungus is observed to be infested with very large numbers of small arthropods, however, at night it seems to be highly attractive to the giant, red triangle slug *Triboniphorus graeffei* which sometimes arrives in large numbers to feed on the sporocarps, presumably attracted by the smell. Numbers of large snails are also attracted.

A final unusual record is that for the mushroom *Agaricus xanthoderma*. Heavy rains in 1990 produced enormous crops of the yellow-staining mushroom and a large fairy ring of the species developed in short grass under wattle trees in a nearby field. A young Hereford cow was observed deliberately feeding on the sporocarps with rather interesting reactions: the animal would take a mouthful of the fungus, chew and swallow; it would then wave its head about while lolling its tongue out and salivating copiously; finally, it would proceed to crop another mouthful. The animal continued until all the ring was eaten and as far as is known suffered no ill effects. There was plenty of good, alternative pasture available, so obviously the animal preferred the taste of the fungus.

## References

- Cleland, J. B. (1934). *Toadstools and Mushrooms and Other Larger Fungi of South Australia I*: 24–27. Government Printer, Adelaide, South Australia.
- Strahan, R. (1983) (editor). *The Australian Museums Complete Book of Australian Mammals*. Angus & Robertson, Sydney, Australia.

## ABRS GRANTS IN MYCOLOGY

Dr K. Thomas	Taxonomic Studies of Aquatic Hyphomycetes in Eastern Australia	\$3 400
Assoc. Prof. W. Shipton	Taxonomic Studies of Family Saprolegniaceae and Order Leptomitales in Tropical Australia	\$21 961
Dr N. Bougher	Taxonomic Revision of truffle-like Cortinariaceae ( <i>Hymenogaster s. l.</i> and <i>Thaxterogaster</i> ) in Australia	\$10 000
Dr K. Hyde	Flora Accounts of Family Phyllachoraceae	\$11 260
Mr P. Johnston	Rhytismatales of Australia, Part 1	\$4 000
Mr I. Pascoe	Taxonomic Revision of Genus <i>Phytophthora</i> (Oomycota: Peronosporales)	\$19 703

## CORRECTION AND APOLOGY

In the December 1995 issue of the *Australasian Mycological Newsletter* an article appeared over my name, purporting to give the volume plan for the forthcoming *Fungi of Australia* series. It should be noted that

1. The article was not written by me, and was published without my knowledge or agreement.
2. The 'plan' was an interim draft only, prepared for internal use within ABRS and its Editorial Committee, and is still subject to change, perhaps major change.
3. The 'plan' is based on a classification developed by John Walker. This forms an integral part of a chapter on fungal classification he has written for the *Fungi of Australia* series, and is subject to copyright held by him. He did not authorise its premature release either.

I, and ABRS, sincerely regret that this document found its way into publication, and apologise for any inconvenience or embarrassment suffered by John Walker. The final volume plan for the *Fungi of Australia* series, along with John's full classification and supporting arguments, will be published in *Fungi of Australia* vol. 1A, now expected in print about May 1996.

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## PHYLOGENY OF CORTINARIACEAE

Bruno Gasparini, Via B. Budrio 12, 34149 Trieste, Italy, wishes to correspond with mycologists in Australasia who are interested in or working on the phylogeny of the Cortinariaceae.