



# CONTENTS

<b>6</b> ..... INTRODUCTION	<b>134</b> ..... PATHOGENS, PANDEMICS, AND SCOURGES
<b>12</b> ..... WHAT ARE FUNGI?	<b>170</b> ..... MUTUALISTIC SYMBIONTS
<b>28</b> ..... REPRODUCTION	<b>206</b> ..... FUNGI AND HUMANS
<b>64</b> ..... CHEMISTRY AND PHYSIOLOGY	<b>242</b> ..... FUNGI AND THE FUTURE
<b>98</b> ..... SAPROBES AND PARASITES	<b>278</b> Glossary
	<b>282</b> Useful resources
	<b>283</b> Index
	<b>288</b> Acknowledgments



# INTRODUCTION

## **“Everything depends on everything else.”**

(Translated credo of the Haida people of the Pacific Northwest)

All life on the planet is connected, but these connections go mostly unseen. As you read this, for example, microbes covering much of the surface of your body—inside and out—are going about their business. In fact, the vast majority of living cells that make the ecosystem that is “you” are not human; the vast majority are microbial, and some are fungal.

It’s a similar story with the tree outside your window, which is mostly of non-living tree cells; most of the living cells making up that tree are probably not tree or even plant cells. Endophytic organisms inside the plant’s tissues are responsible for much of the

hormonal control of the plant, determining its drought resistance, heat resistance, and toxin production in response to attack by pathogens or herbivory. Mycorrhizae of the tree’s roots are responsible for the uptake of water and nutrients. These fungi are attached to adjacent and unrelated trees, and have fruitbodies that host fungi-eating (mycophagous) arthropods. These arthropods are in turn parasitized by nematodes, or by smaller arthropods, such as braconid parasitoid wasps. Those tiny parasitoid wasps rely on viruses to mask their invading parasite egg from the immune system of the host’s larva, and so the connections go on.

What all of these living organisms have in common, though—indeed, what every living organism on this planet has in common—is a reliance on fungi. Yet even though fungi are all around us, they remain poorly understood. With our planet and natural resources under constant assault from an ever-shrinking habitat and a burgeoning human population that brings with it pollution, invasive species, and other manmade disasters, it is becoming increasingly important that we are aware of the natural treasures that exist all around us.

Mushrooms and other fungi are beautiful and interesting organisms, which I know is an opinion that is not shared by everyone. If considered at all, fungi are often seen as mere recyclers of nutrients and decomposers of organic matter in the environment—rotters of the once-living. However, recently developed methods to detect organismal DNA from the environment, improved microscopic techniques, and novel methods for culturing and cultivating,





are showing that fungi are much more ubiquitous than we thought. They are also revealing that fungi are much more important to the environment and, by extension, to ourselves.

Based on sheer mass and the number of species, fungi (along with insects) are likely the most common and most evolutionarily successful organisms on the planet. Fungi can be found thriving on all continents of Earth, from the loftiest peaks to the driest deserts, from the depths of the world's oceans to our own backyards. Nor do they stop at our doors—they can be found thriving (to the chagrin of most) within our own homes. With advances in modern microscopy we have come to know that molds and other fungi are found in just about every niche in the environment and that probably no plants—long considered the keystones of all habitats—can thrive for very long without their

↑ *Favolaschia calocera* is a beautiful rotter of wood that has recently been turning up in many new places and new habitats. A changing climate and international travel and trade are changing the mycological landscapes around us.

← Mushrooms are the reproductive structures of fungi and come in a bewildering assortment of shapes and forms. The Common Splitgill (*Schizophyllum commune*) is one of the most ubiquitous of all mushrooms, found on dead wood of every continent except Antarctica.



fungal partners. Obligately intertwined among roots as mycorrhizae, growing epiphytically on plant surfaces, and found within plant tissues as endophytes, fungi are the true puppet masters in nature. Conversely, fungi also cause the vast majority of disease among plant species, including those to which we owe our very survival as sources of food, fiber, and medicines; again, fungi pull the strings.

As a species, we humans have come to a crucial point in our history. About 2.5 billion people inhabited our planet when I was born, but by the early 1990s, when I was a graduate student studying mushrooms and other fungi, our population had increased to 5.3 billion. Now that number is 7.8 billion, which is projected to rise to 9.7 billion by 2050. These snowballing figures highlight the immense challenges we face when tackling global climate change and figuring out how, as a species, we can sustain the healthy ecosystems that we depend on for our existence.

There is no doubt that fungi will play an important role in this process, as humans have collected, used, and eaten mushrooms and other fungi for (arguably) as long as we have been human—most likely longer. Today, wild forest mushrooms are harvested on every continent except Antarctica, and many species can be

↑ Fungi come in a tremendous array of colors, their forms and shapes range from very simple to complex, and at times otherworldly. Their ecology and roles they play in the environment are every bit as diverse.



cultivated with relative ease. However, the most abundant edible mushrooms are ectomycorrhizal, which means that they symbiotically interact with tree roots. These species have sufficient ongoing supplies of nutrition from their tree hosts to support abundant annual fruiting, but forests around the world face tremendous pressure for other uses. This often results in deforestation or degraded forest ecosystems, with a direct impact on the fungi they host.

Yet as crucially important as they are to the planet, we pay the average fungus almost no attention as it goes about its business, even though fungi do things and live in ways that would seem otherworldly to most people (some fungi do things you probably could not imagine). Sometimes, though, if the conditions are just right, and you happen to be at exactly the right place at exactly the right time, you might witness a moment

of magic as mushrooms emerge from the forest floor. Their amazing hydraulic strength betrays their presumed delicate mien as they push up debris and duff. One by one, their caps mature and open to release innumerable spores to the vagaries of the slightest breeze. There is no telling where those spores will alight, but if the conditions and substrate are favorable, the cycle will begin anew. But the mushroom is just the mycological tip of the iceberg, as the main body of the fungus remains hidden. Moreover, the fungi that produce macroscopic fruitbodies—mushrooms that are large enough for you to notice—form just a tiny fraction of all the fungi. So just what are fungi? What are they up to and what are they doing in the environment?

# What are fungi?

**Fungi comprise an entire kingdom of life, and just as members of the animal or plant kingdoms are very different from one another, so are members of the fungal kingdom. Their ways of obtaining nutrition, their defense mechanisms, genetics, reproduction, communication, and so on, are very different to the animalian ways that are familiar to most people.**



↓ *Cordyceps militaris* in cultivation.



For most of scientific history, fungi were considered to be plants. Beginning with Aristotle, all living things were treated either as plants or as animals, depending on whether they could move or not. The system of classification that we use today—with ranks of relatedness such as kingdom, phyla, genera, and so on—was developed by Carolus Linnaeus in the eighteenth century. However, although it is more sophisticated, it didn't much change things for fungi, which were still thought of as plants. So it is more than a little ironic that today, with a much better grasp of the evolutionary relatedness of all life on the planet, it turns out that the organisms most closely related to fungi are not plant, but animals (including us).

If you encountered a mushroom in your local woods, you would of course recognize it. Likewise, holding a green leaf in your hand you would know that it came from a plant. But the vast majority of fungi do not make mushrooms, and what if the plant material were not green? How would you then know what you were looking at? For that matter, how is life classified? To answer such a fundamental question, you have to know a bit about biology and physiology.

The first rule of biology is that living things are made of cells; the cell is a collection of all the materials needed to conduct the life of that organism, contained within a semipermeable phospholipid membrane. However, as simple as this sounds, not all biologists agree—according to this definition, a virus would not be a living entity, but some scientists would argue otherwise.

At the simplest level, all life is divided into Prokaryotes and Eukaryotes. Prokaryotes are single-celled organisms (which include bacteria) that lack membrane-bound organelles and do not have a nucleus, and their DNA consists of a single, circular chromosome. In addition to a cell membrane, bacteria may or may not have a rigid cell wall, but that's about it.

## INTRODUCTION

In comparison, Eukaryotes are far more organized from a physiological standpoint. They feature membrane-bound organelles, such as mitochondria and a nucleus, and DNA that is organized as complex chromosomes. Eukaryotes include single-celled protists, plants, animals, and fungi.

Fungi derive their energy from all heterotrophic means imaginable—and probably some fungi do things you could not imagine. Perhaps most fungi are parasites, and it is likely that all plants have species-specific fungal pathogens; many of our agricultural crop varieties have variety-specific fungal pathogens. Other fungi are saprobes (deriving their nourishment from decomposing dead organic matter), while some are mutualistic symbionts of other organisms, especially plants. A few fungi are carnivorous, trapping and killing their animal prey as a source of nitrogen.

What all fungi have in common, though, is cell walls composed of chitin, which gives the body of the

fungus strength and flexibility. Chitin is somewhat similar to the cellulose found in plants, but is made of long chains of carbohydrates that are connected by a different specific chemical bond. In addition to fungi, chitin is found in the exoskeletons of insects and other arthropods; the group of protists most closely related to fungi also has cell walls of chitin.

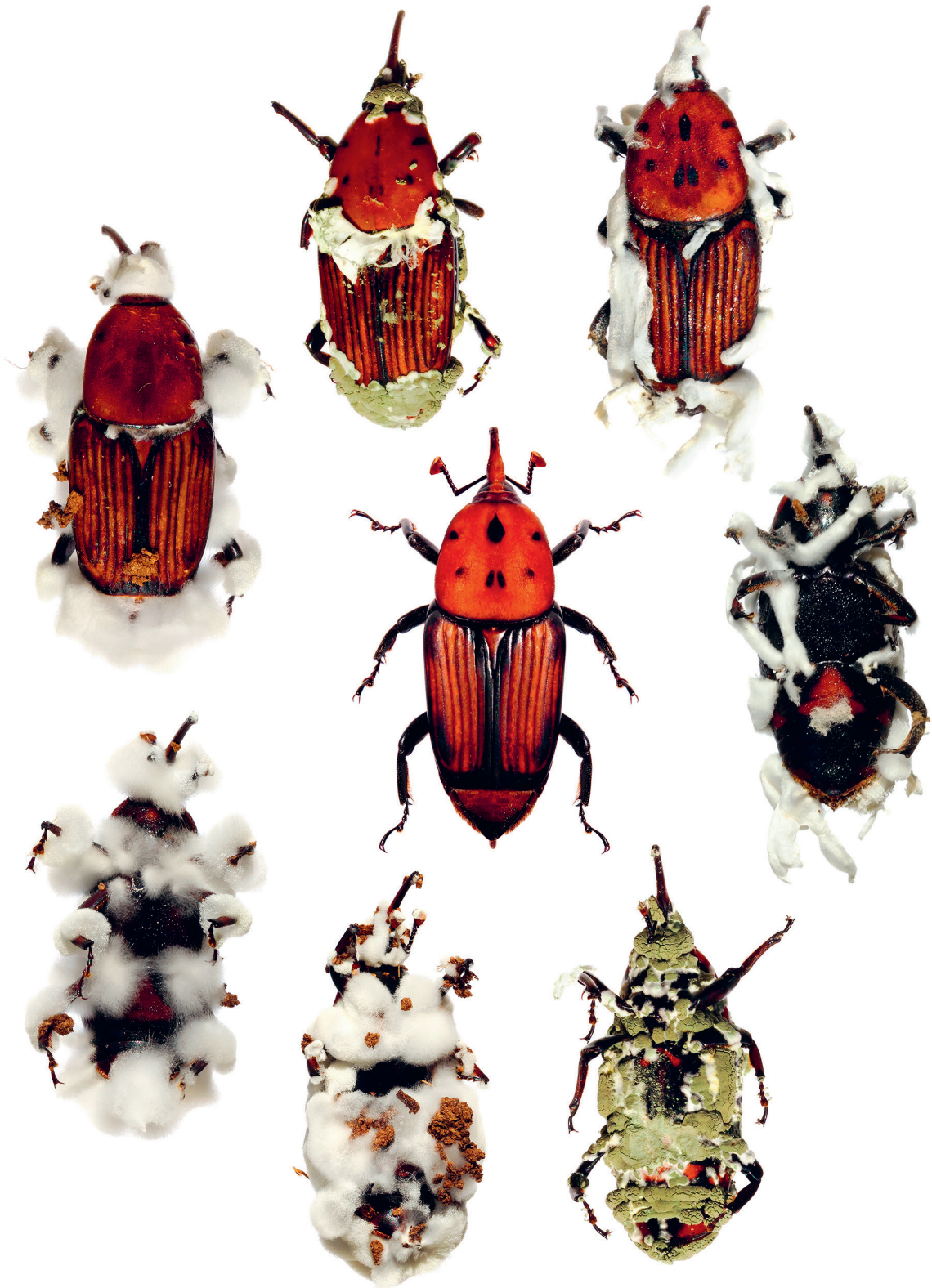
Humans do not produce chitinases, which are the enzymes needed to degrade chitin. A popular misconception is that because fungi are composed of chitin, they're indigestible and not nutritious. However, although it is true that there is little nutrition to be had from chitin (or plant cellulose for that matter), there is plenty else within the cells of fungi and plants that is nutritious. Also, the chitin we ingest when we consume mushrooms and other fungi passes through us as fiber, in much the same way as plant cellulose. While it is indigestible, fiber has a beneficial role in our diets.



← Stinkhorns like *Aseroë rubra*, may look like some form of extraterrestrial life but are highly specialized for spore production and entice insects to do much of the work for them, in a similar fashion to insect pollination of plants.

→ Fungi are not always mutualists with insects. *Beauveria bassiana* and *Metarhizium anisopliae* are entomopathogenic (insect-killing) fungi and shown here on Red Palm Weevil (*Rhynchophorus ferrugineus*); by way of comparison, an uninfected specimen is shown in the center.







### FORM AND FUNCTION

Fungal reproductive structures come in a wide array of sizes, shapes, and colors, but fruitbodies that are large enough to be called mushrooms are produced only by ascomycetes and basidiomycetes. Common fruitbody forms are often grouped as fruitbodies with gills, pores or tubes, teeth or spines (agarics and boletes); shelf-like mushrooms with pores or gills (polypores); bird's nest and cup fungi; puffballs and puffball-like fungi; jelly fungi; coral and club fungi; and truffles and truffle-like fungi.

However, a similarity of fruitbody forms can be misleading and has led mycologists to disagree on classification schemes in the past. As a fascinating result of convergent evolution, ascomycete and basidiomycete fungi feature species that produce similar-looking mushrooms, such as cups, clubs, and truffles. Convergent evolution has driven groups within a phylum to produce similar looking forms as well. Thus we have several orders within the basidiomycetes that produce shelf-like fruitbodies, but not all of them are polypores. It is the environment and natural selection that drives the organism into a best fit for its situation, which is why we have many groups of basidiomycete fungi that produce truffle-like forms—this type of fruitbody is most suited to life in arid environments.

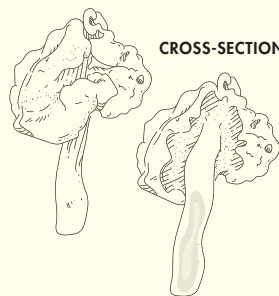
↑ Mushrooms often take on beautiful forms, sometimes resembling other organisms, like this coral mushroom, *Ramaria stricta*.

**Diverse forms for reproduction**

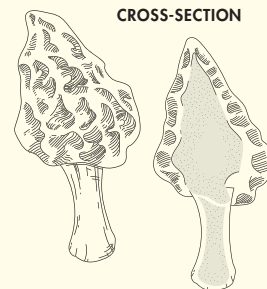
Fungi and fungi-like organisms produce reproductive structures in a wide array of sizes, shapes, and colors. Common forms feature gills, pores or tubes, teeth or spines; may be shelf-like with pores or gills; cup-shaped, coral or club-shaped; amorphous oozing or jelly-like; or round and spherical like a ball. Many tiny molds form no fruitbody at all, and simply create reproductive propagules from conidiophores.



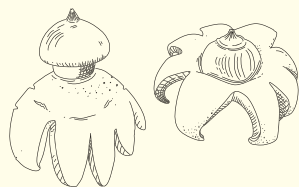
**CHANTERELLES**



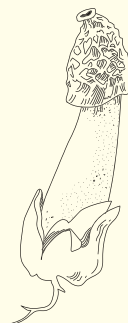
**FALSE MORELS**



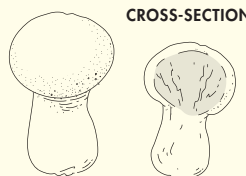
**TRUE MORELS**



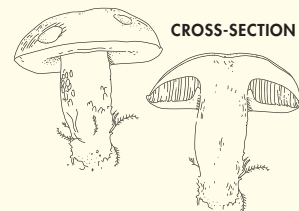
**EARTH STARS**



**STINKHORNS**



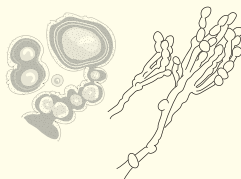
**PUFFBALL**



**BOLETES**



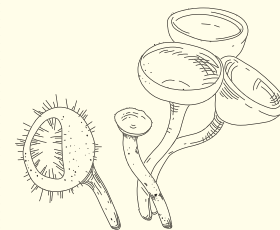
**SIMPLE CONIDIOPHORES**



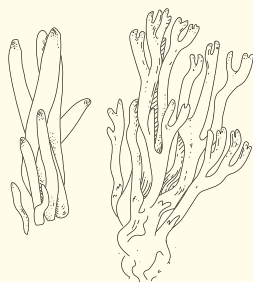
**SIMPLE CONIDIOPHORES**



**OZZING PLASMODIUM**



**CUP FUNGI**



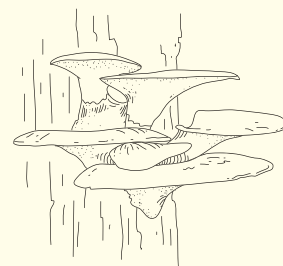
**CORAL FUNGI**



**GILLED FUNGI**



**TEETH FUNGI**



**POLYPORES**



### THE FUNGAL FOSSIL RECORD

Although soft fleshy fungi do not fossilize very well, we do have a fossil record for them. The first fungi undoubtedly originated in water, like much of the earliest life on Earth. Based on the fossil record, fungi are presumed to have been present in the Late Proterozoic, 900–570 million years ago (MYA), and maybe further back than that; the oldest “fungus” microfossils were found in Victoria Island shale and date to around 850M–1.4B years old, although the jury is still out on whether they are truly fungal.

Whatever the precise date, the consensus seems to be that fungi probably arrived on land just ahead of the first terrestrial plants (which date to around 700 MYA), and paved the way for plants to move from a marine environment to ever-drier habitats.

The first “lichen-like” organisms we see in the fossil record date to around 600 MYA, and around 550 MYA

the chytrids and higher fungi split from a common ancestor. The first taxonomically identifiable fungi are from 460 MYA, and seem similar to modern Glomeromycota. At about 400 MYA is when the Basidiomycota and Ascomycota split from a common ancestor. The first insects came on to the scene around 400 MYA; the first beetles and flies date to around 245 MYA.

Much of what we know of no-longer-extant fungi comes from specimens found in amber. Due to the preservative qualities of the tree resin, amber is one medium that preserves exquisite detail in delicate objects such as fungal bodies. Not only does the resin prevent air from reaching the fossils, but it also withdraws moisture from the tissue, resulting in a process known as inert dehydration. Furthermore, amber possesses antimicrobial compounds that kill any microorganisms that would decay organic matter,

naturally embalming anything that gets trapped. Because of these properties a few fossilized mushrooms have been preserved beautifully in amber that dates from the Cenozoic and Cretaceous periods. The oldest mushroom is *Palaeoagaricites antiquus* (100 MYA), which resembles modern-day members of the family Tricholomataceae, while other species include *Archaeomarasmius legettii* (90 MYA), *Protomyцена electra* (20 MYA), and *Coprinites dominicana* (20 MYA). The latter three all look pretty much the same as mushrooms you can find in woods today.

Mycorrhizal relationships are believed to have arisen more than 400 MYA, as plants began to colonize terrestrial habitats. These relationships are seen as a key innovation in the evolution of vascular plants. Recently, the first fossil ectomycorrhiza associated with flowering plants (angiosperms) was discovered. The fossils were found in a piece of Lower Eocene (52 MYA) Indian amber, from a time only 13 million years after the demise of the dinosaurs. Mycorrhizas are extremely rare in the fossil record.

↖ As discussed in the text, amber preserves entombed organisms exquisitely. Although very few fossils of mushrooms are known, organisms that feed on fungi are frequently found in amber, such as this mycophagous phorid fly.

→ The oldest known fungal fossil is *Oursaphira giraldae* found in shale that formed between 900 and one billion years ago in what is now the Northwest Territories of Canada. Despite its age, the fossils are very well preserved. Spores of the fungus, clearly visible, are less than a tenth of a millimeter long and connect to one another by slender, branching hyphal filaments.



## CLASSIFICATION AND TAXONOMY

At the time of writing there are around 100,000 species of named fungi, although it has been estimated that there are probably more like 1.5 million species in total, meaning the vast majority of fungi await discovery and description. The reason for this is because fungi are cryptic—the microscopic size of most of them makes them difficult to find, and those that elude culture often remain unknown. However, we know there are many unseen fungi out there because they leave their DNA behind in soil and other substrates.

The major groups of fungi have been classified according to characteristics of their sexual reproductive structures, which until recently meant that fungi were grouped into four classes: chytridiomycetes, zygomycetes, basidiomycetes, and ascomycetes. Although it is overly

simplified, this taxonomic scheme is still a pretty useful system when it comes to understanding what these fungi are and how they reproduce.

More recently developed classification schemes separate fungi into additional classes (or phyla), although not all scientists agree on the taxonomic hierarchies for some of the oddball groups. Formal phylum names are capitalized (Chytridiomycota, Glomeromycota Basidiomycota, and Ascomycota), while “Zygomycota” is often represented with quotations, as it is something of an artificial group of fungi that, together, are not monophyletic. Among these groups, basidiomycetes and ascomycetes fungi (or “basidios” and “ascos” as they are sometimes referred to by mycophiles) are collectively known as the “higher” fungi. Other than mycologists, most people are familiar only with the larger showy fungi of the basidiomycetes and a few ascomycetes.

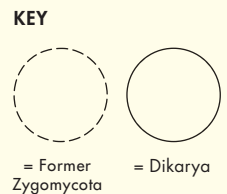
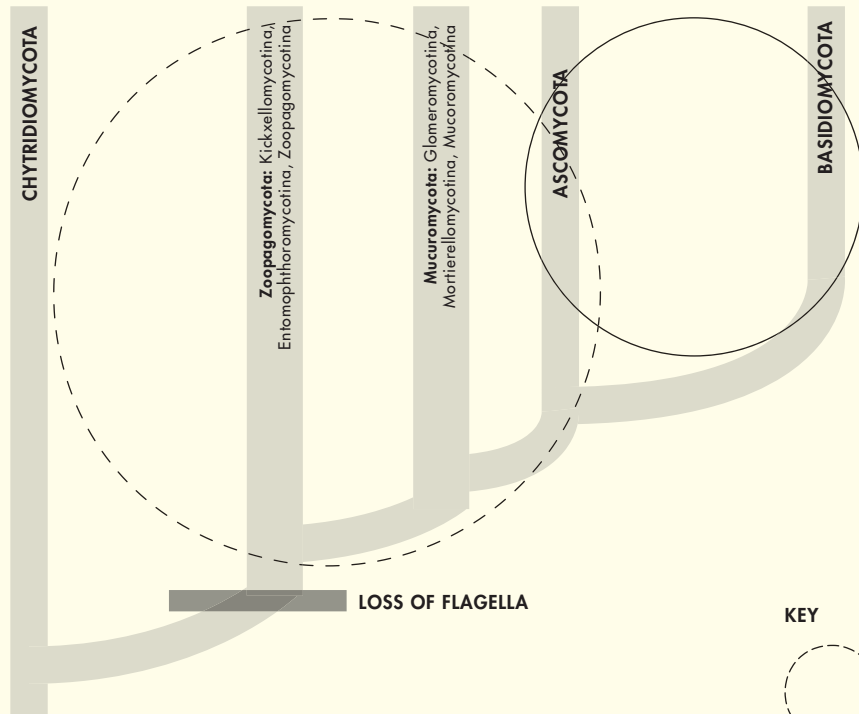
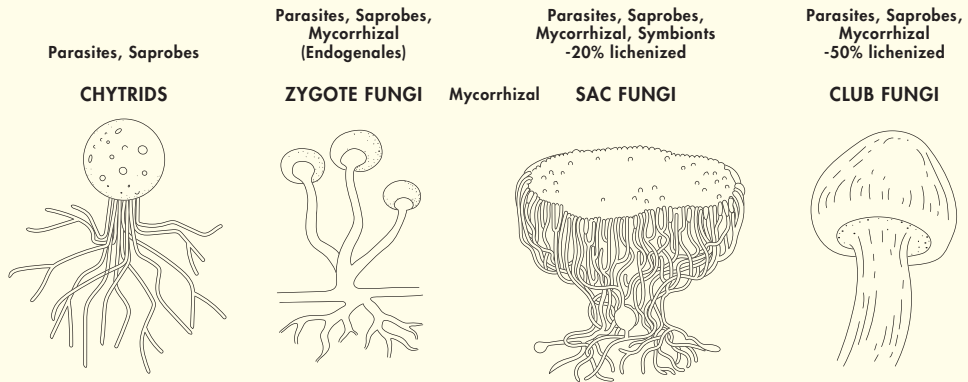
However, if fungi are classified on the basis of how they reproduce sexually (the teleomorphic or “perfect” life cycle state), what happens with asexual forms (the anamorphic or “imperfect” state)? A great many fungi are known only as anamorphs, and many of these are economically important—they cause damage to our crops, rot our stored foods, or cause mycoses. Such fungi are troublesome for the taxonomists whose job it is to come up with names for them, so in the past these “imperfect” fungi were simply lumped into one big group (the deuteromycetes or *fungi imperfecti*), regardless of their evolutionary relatedness. More recently, though, DNA sequence analysis has enabled researchers to finally determine the teleomorphic state, and thus teleomorphic name, for any fungus, without the need to attempt to get it to produce sexual spores in culture.

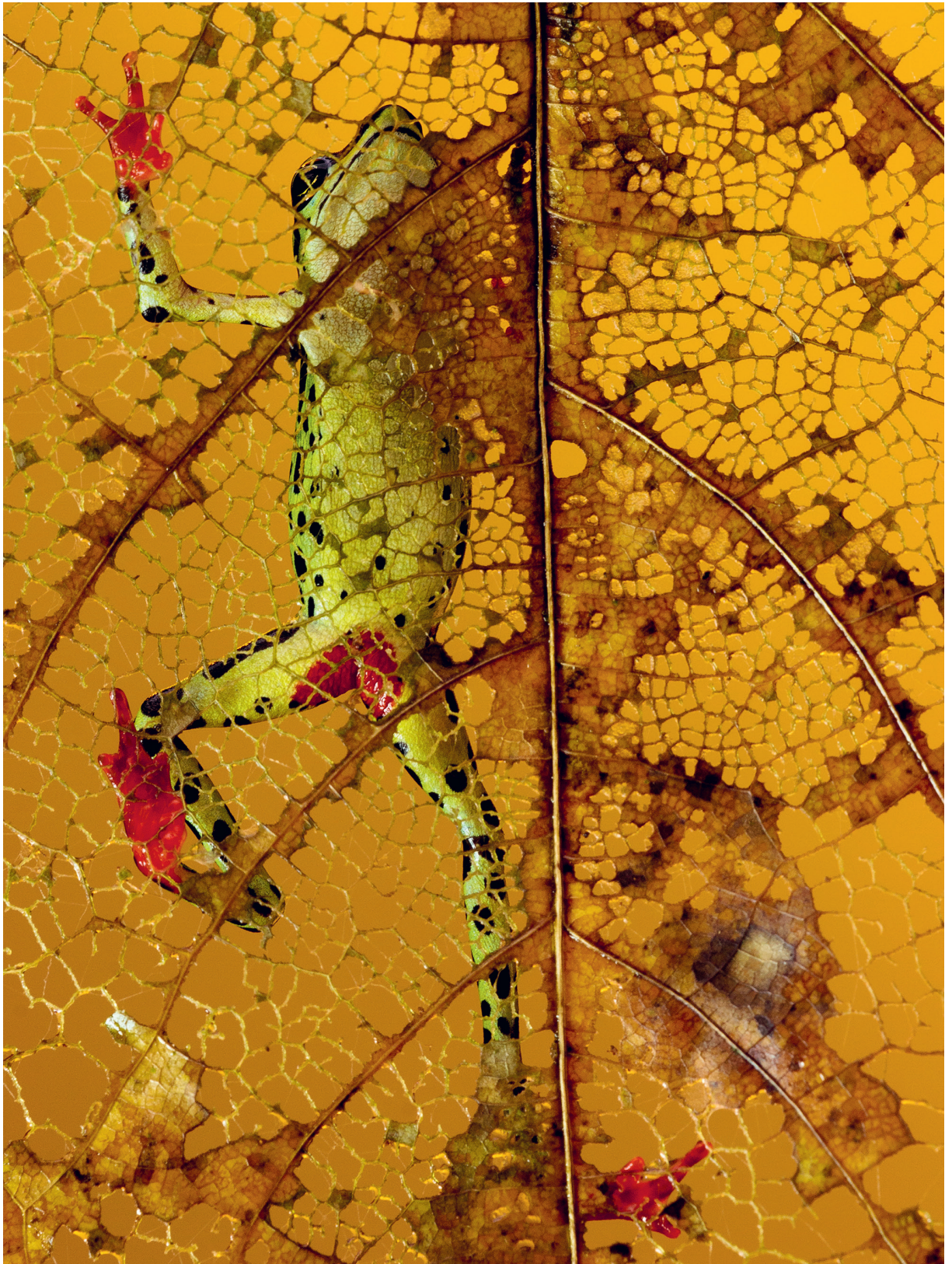


← Young oyster mushrooms (*Pleurotus* species) are a favorite culinary mushroom and easy to cultivate.

**Fungal Phylogeny**

Modern classification schemes separate fungi into phyla Chytridiomycota, Glomeromycota, Basidiomycota, and Ascomycota, and the polyphyletic "Zygomycota" is slowly getting teased apart. The ecology of each group of fungi is also pointed out, as well as those that are motile.

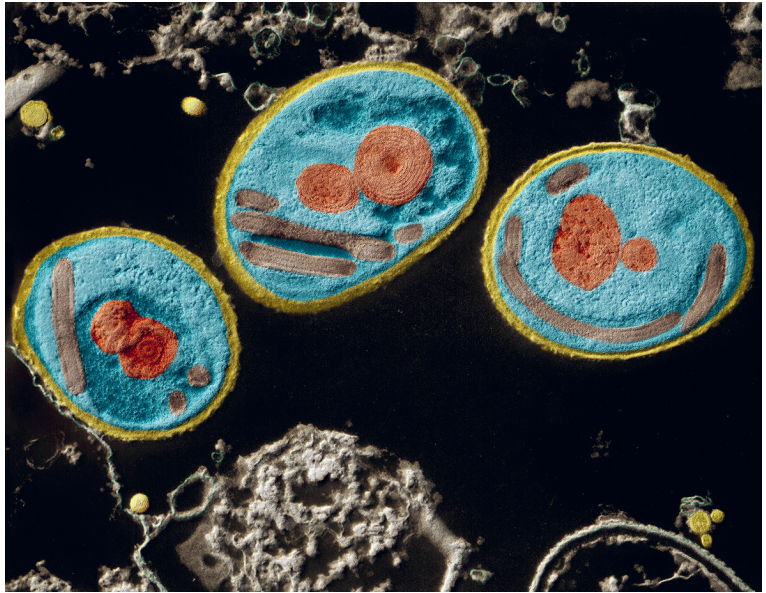






← Chytrid fungi are infamous pathogens of amphibians like this infected Pebas Stubfoot toad (*Atelopus spumarius*) crawling over a leaf in Ecuador.

→ Some of the strangest and least known fungi are the Microsporidia, seen here at 58,000 X magnification using color-enhanced transmission electron microscopy (TEM). Microsporidia live entirely within the cells of their hosts and have extremely reduced physiologies and genomes.



DNA sequence analysis for some imperfect fungi has also led to some surprises. In the case of the *Aspergillus* (and this has been known for decades), it was confirmed that more than 300 species belong to no fewer than 11 teleomorphic genera. This was slightly problematic, as *Aspergillus* is an asexual name. So, in 2012, scientists changed the rules on how things are named, making allowances for well-established asexual names in cases where switching to the sexual name would be a major headache. Consequently, some *Aspergillus* species (including notorious mycotoxin producers such as *Aspergillus flavus*, *A. parasiticus*, and *A. ochraceus*) retain the anamorphic name, but when it's preferential to use teleomorphic names, as in well-established sexual genera like *Eurotium*, *Emericella*, and *Neosartorya*, those names are used instead.

Before we launch into a brief discussion of the “true” fungi, it is worth mentioning the newest group of fungi: the Microsporidia. Until 2006, this strange group of tiny organisms was thought to be protist, but it is now considered to be extremely simplified primitive fungi, or possibly just the nearest relatives to fungi—it's going to take further analysis to clarify the

evolutionary relationships for this group. It's unlikely you will spy a microsporidian on your next foray in the woods, though, as Microsporidia are very tiny, unicellular parasites of animals (mostly insects, but a few are known parasites of humans). The entire life of a microsporidian, including replication, takes place within the cell of its host. If they came from a true fungal ancestor, they long ago gave up hyphal growth to live as endosymbionts. Microsporidians are some of the smallest known Eukaryotes and have the smallest Eukaryotic genomes.

While the microsporidians are the newest group, the chytridiomycetes have been long considered the most primitive of the “true” fungi. Found worldwide, most chytrids are saprotrophs, feeding on decomposing organic matter, although some species are parasites of plants and animals (as you will see later in this book, chytrids are linked to the worldwide die-off of amphibians). Chytrids are the only motile fungi, producing zoospores that are propelled by whip-like flagella; all fungi placed above chytrids on the fungal tree of life are nonmotile.



Our next group, the zygomycetes, was always a mixed bag of fungi placed together by virtue of having aseptate hyphae. Some well-known examples of zygomycete fungi include black bread mold (*Rhizopus stolonifer*), and *Pilobolus* species (the Hat Thrower), which are capable of ejecting spores great distances.

Glomeralean (also spelled glomalean) fungi were once part of the zygomycetes, but have now been elevated to their own phylum, the Glomeromycota. These fungi are poorly known, as few have been seen or cultured. Few (if any) have sexual reproduction; they form no obvious fruitbodies; some form clusters of asexual spores, and that's about it. We also know that glomeralean fungi are mutualistic symbionts of most plants, so they are likely the puppet masters of all life on the planet.

The most recently evolved of all fungi are the basidiomycete and ascomycete, which share a common ancestor. The basidiomycetes include most of the

mushrooms people are familiar with and produce sexual spores on club-like stalks called basidia (giving them their alternative name, club fungi), while the ascomycetes (known as sac fungi) produce sexual spores in a special sac-like structure called an ascus. The ascomycetes are the largest group of fungi, and include morels, truffles, and yeasts.

Both groups grow by hyphae with septa, although some members grow as single-celled yeast, and they live as saprotrophs, parasites, or mutualistic symbionts.

↑ Some of the ascomycete fungi produce very colorful cup-shaped mushrooms like this pretty *Sarcoscypha coccinea*, the Scarlet Elf Cup.

→ In the 1800s, German naturalist Ernst Haeckel studied and illustrated numerous animals but a few fungi impressed him as well, notably the showy basidiomycetes.





## FUNGAL PATHOGENS

Many of the fungi on the planet today—perhaps even the majority of them—are pathogens. But as with all life, fungi also have their own parasites and pathogens. In fact, there are many fungi that are parasites of other fungi. For example, the common jelly fungus *Tremella* (Witch’s Butter) was long thought to be a saprobe of rotting wood, as it is often seen growing near species of *Stereum* (False Turkey Tail), which is another saprobe on fallen logs. However, it turns out that *Tremella* is a parasite of fungi like *Stereum* (and *Peniophora*).

Just like animals, fungi can be afflicted by viruses, virus-like pathogens, and even prions (scientists study the prions of yeast fungi to better understand how prions cause diseases in mammals, such as kuru of humans, scrapie of sheep, bovine encephalopathy of cattle, and chronic wasting disease of deer). Viruses are quite common in fungi and can cause economically important diseases like La France Disease in commercial mushroom farms. Fungal viruses are persistent, with transmission known to occur through anastomosis and via spores. As anastomosis occurs only between fungi of the same species (and usually the same strain), this method of transmission does not introduce viruses to new species.

In most cases, the role of viruses in the life of fungi is not known. However, in some plant pathogenic fungi the virus can act as a mutualist of the plant by reducing the effect of the pathology of the fungus. The best-studied example of this is Chestnut Blight, which is caused by the fungus *Cryphonectria parasitica*; when the fungus harbors *Cryphonectria hypovirus*, the pathology of the fungus on the plant is greatly reduced. This has

← Witch’s Butter (*Tremella mesenterica*) is commonly seen on dead wood and often presumed a saprobe. In reality, this fungus is a parasite of other fungi growing within the rotting wood.

↗ Many different symbiotic organisms grow together. Each lichen is composed of several organisms, including fungi and photobionts.



been proposed as a method to rejuvenate the chestnut forests that once covered most of eastern North America. Other examples of hypovirulence-associated viruses in plant pathogenic fungi have also been found, including in *Ophiostoma ulmi*, the causative agent of Dutch Elm Disease.

Although not mutualists of their fungal hosts, these viruses are still beneficial for the plants that harbor the fungal pathogens. Indeed, in one instance, a fungal virus is an obligate partner in a complex three-way

mutualistic symbiosis that allows plants to grow in geothermal soils in Yellowstone National Park, USA. *Dichanthelium lanuginosum* is a panic grass that grows in soils with temperatures of  $>122^{\circ}\text{F}$  ( $>50^{\circ}\text{C}$ ), but to grow in these warm soils it requires a fungal endophyte (*Curvularia protuberata*) that is infected with *Curvularia* thermal tolerance virus. This is a clear mutualism, as the grass cannot survive without the fungus, and the fungus must also be infected with the virus—without that infection, no thermotolerance is conferred to the plants.





## THE FUTURE AND FUNGI

It's an exciting time to be a scientist. Although we are finding out a lot of bad things about the state of our planet's health, which can be depressing, we can take some solace in the fact that our scientific sophistication is now allowing us to see and know this. We are now able to model and predict the outcome of taking steps (or not) to reverse our course, and scientists are better able to comprehend how complex ecosystems work. We are now able to inventory all life—even that which we cannot see—before any more of it vanishes.

Subsequently, it is likely that all humans alive on the planet today are part of the most crucial century of our long history, and our decisions will dramatically impact the future of humanity and the entire living planet. However, we are not alone in facing this challenge: all life in the ecosystem is connected, and everything depends on everything else. Underpinning many of these connections are fungi, which are some of the key decomposers, pathogens, and symbionts of this world. So prepare to enter a world that is very different from the one you're accustomed to: the (mostly) hidden world of fungi.

Mycologists (those who study fungi) have their own terminology for ways of describing fungi and their morphological features. Although this book presumes no prior scientific background, scientific terminology is inevitable in any text about natural history and living things, but do not be intimidated—a glossary at the end explains the technical terms used in this book.

← You've seen mushrooms in the environment. Once you learn about their ecology and what their role in nature is, you will see them in an altogether new light.

# INDEX

## A

actin 36  
*Agaricus* 106  
*Ajellomyces* 112  
alcohol 78–83, 162, 232  
*Amanita* 76  
*Amanita caesarea* 158–9  
*Amanita muscaria* 229, 236–7  
*Amanita phalloides* 150, 229  
amatoxins 76  
amber 16–17  
ambrosia beetles 46, 175  
amphibian decline 138–9, 228  
anastomosis 24  
ants 85, 175, 177, 198, 226  
Apple Scab 117–19  
appressorium 115  
Aquatic Mushroom 58–9  
arbuscular mycorrhizas 183, 210–11, 213  
*Archaeomarasmius legettii* 17  
*Armillaria* 68, 72, 117  
*Armillaria mellea* 74  
*Arthrobotrys* 226  
*Arthrobotrys dactyloides* 234–5  
Artillery Fungus 56–7  
*Artocarpus* 50  
ascomycetes 14, 16, 18, 22, 48, 60–1, 84, 86–9, 92–5, 104, 106, 110, 116, 118–19, 122–3, 126–7, 130–3, 143, 150, 160–1, 168–9, 196–7, 200–1, 215, 232–5  
biofuels 225  
lichens 191, 200  
spore release 31  
temperature 69  
ascus 22, 31, 119  
Ash Bolete 204–5  
*Aspergillus* 21  
*Aspergillus sydowii* 136  
atomic radiation 69  
*Auriscalpium vulgare* 104  
autotrophs 69

## B

ballistospory 32–3  
Bamboo Stinkhorn 54–5  
basidia 22, 32, 33  
basidiomycetes 14, 16, 18, 22, 52–9, 90–1, 106, 119, 124–5, 128–9, 158–9, 164–7, 194–5, 198–9, 202–5, 230–1, 236–41  
bioluminescence 72  
butt infections 117  
farming 175, 177, 178  
lichens 191, 200  
post-fire 217  
spore release 31, 32–3, 40  
*Batrachochytrium dendrobatidis* 138–9  
bats 138, 140–1, 228  
Beech Orange Fungus 122–3  
Beetle Hangers 196–7  
berry truffles 60  
biocontrols 226  
biodiversity 136, 184, 208, 218–20  
biofuels 224, 225  
bioluminescence 72–5  
biotrophs 101, 110, 114–15, 122, 179  
Birch Polypore 90  
bird's nest fungi 40–1  
Black Bolete 178–9  
black mold 22, 107, 232  
*Blastomyces* 112  
Blewit 104  
boletes 178–9, 204–5  
Bordeaux Mixture 162  
“botrytized” wines 232  
*Botrytis cinerea* 232–3  
bracket fungi 35, 104  
brewing yeasts 78–83  
brown rot fungi 103, 104  
*Bryoria fremontii* 200–1  
*Bryoria tortuosa* 200–1  
Buisman, Christine 143  
Buller's drop 32–3

Burn Morels 217  
butt rots 104, 117

## C

Caesar's Mushroom 158–9  
*Candida albicans* 112  
carbon crisis 210–13  
carbon fixation 102  
carnivorous fungi 12  
Caterpillar Fungus 92–3  
Cedar Apple Rust 121  
cell walls 12  
cellulase 101, 178, 181, 224  
cellulose 12, 46, 102–3, 106, 177, 178, 181, 198, 224  
*Cerrena unicolor* 194–5  
Charles VI, Holy Roman Emperor 150  
*Cheilymenia coprinaria* 106  
chempedak tree 50  
Chestnut Blight 24–5, 141  
chitin 12  
*Chlorociboria* 70  
*Chlorociboria aeruginascens* 132–3  
*Choanephora* 50  
chytridiomycetes 18, 21, 116, 138–9  
chytridiomycosis 138–9  
cicadas 96  
*Cladosporium* 69  
Claudius Caesar 150, 158  
*Claviceps purpurea* 48, 88–9, 150  
Clement VII, Pope 150  
climate change 139, 166, 208–20, 228  
*Clitocybe nuda* 104  
club fungi *see* basidiomycetes  
*Coccidioides* 112  
coevolution 122, 174, 177, 178  
coffee 152–3  
Coffee Rust 152–3  
commensalism 101, 172  
common jelly fungus 24

common stalked polypore 36  
conidia 50, 96, 119, 234  
Conifer Maze Conk 202–3  
*Contarinia* 50  
convergent evolution 14, 85, 177, 198  
*Coprinites dominicana* 17  
coprophilous fungi 41, 62, 106–7  
coral bleaching 136  
Corn Smut 124–5  
Corpse Finder 109  
*Creolophus cirrhatus* 220  
*Cronartium ribicola* 120–1  
Crown Rust 119  
*Cryphonectria hypovirus* 24  
*Cryphonectria parasitica* 24, 136, 141  
*Cryptococcus* 69  
*Cryptococcus gattii* 164–5  
Cultivated Mushrooms 238–9  
*Curvularia protuberata* 25  
cyanobacteria 191–2  
*Cyttaria* 80  
*Cyttaria gunnii* 122–3

## D

*Daldinia* 104  
dandruff 112  
Darwin, Charles 54, 80, 122  
Darwin, Henrietta 54  
Death Cap 150, 229  
dermatophytes 110–12  
deuteromycetes (imperfect fungi) 18, 21  
*Dichantherium lanuginosum* 25  
*Disciseda* 40  
discomycetes 50  
Downy Mildew of Grape 162–3  
*Dracula* orchid 51  
Dry Rot Fungus 230–1  
Dutch Elm Disease 25, 142–5



**E**

earpick fungus 104  
ectomycorrhizal fungi 9, 17, 182  
ectozoochory 43–4  
edible fungi 9, 104, 158, 182  
Black Bolete 178  
Corn Smut 124  
Cultivated Mushrooms 238–9  
Cyttaria 80  
Lobster Mushroom 130–1  
St. George's Mushroom 166  
Titan Mushroom 198  
Emerald Ash Borer 204  
Emerging Threat 164–5  
endangered species 215, 218–20  
endomycorrhizal fungi 182–3  
endophytes 6, 8, 25, 48, 60, 86, 92, 184, 217  
endozoochory 43  
entomopathic species 84–5  
Entomophthorales 84–5  
*Epichloë elymi* 48  
epiparasitism 187  
epiphytic fungi 8, 50, 184, 226  
epiphytotic 119  
ergot fungi 49, 76, 88–9, 150  
ergotism 49, 88, 150  
*Eryniopsis lampyridium* 85  
European Fly Agaric 236–7

**F**

Fairy Ring Mushroom 128–9  
fairy rings 106, 128  
False Turkey Tail 24  
farming of fungi 46, 175–9, 198  
field mushrooms 106  
*Flammulina* 36  
Fly Agaric 236–7  
Flying Saltshaker Fungus 96–7  
*Fomes fomentarius* 70, 90–1

fossil record 16–17, 106–7, 177, 181  
La France Disease 24  
Fries, Elias Magnus 168  
fruitbodies 14, 30–3, 36, 40, 43–4, 50, 54, 58–62  
Aquatic Mushroom 58  
*Cyttaria* 80  
*Onygena* 126  
*Termitomyces* 198  
fungicides 118, 156, 157, 162  
funiculus 41  
*Fusarium graminearum* 94–5

**G**

galls 124, 178–9, 204  
Ganoderma 69, 160  
gasteroids 40–1  
*Geopyxis carbonaria* 217  
ghost moths 92  
Ghost Pipes 187  
Ghoul Fungus 109  
Giant Horntail wasp 178  
gilled mushrooms 35, 58, 198, 217  
glomalin 210–11, 213  
glomeralean fungi 22  
Golden Oyster mushroom 229  
gravitropism 35–6  
Great Famine 136, 138, 154  
green algae 191–2  
Green Stain 132–3  
*Gymnosporangium juniperi-virginiana* 121  
Gypsy Moth 117  
*Gyrodon meruloides* 204–5

**H**

Hartig net 182  
Hat Thrower 22, 62–3  
heart rot 104, 226  
*Hebeloma aminophilum* 109  
*Hebeloma radicosum* 109  
*Hebeloma syrjense* 109

*Hesperomyces virescens* 196–7  
*Heterobasidium annosum* 226  
heteroecious fungi 119  
heterotrophs 12, 101  
*Histoplasma* 112  
honey mushrooms 68  
honeydew 107, 179  
Horn Stalkball 126–7  
Horsehair Lichens 200–1  
Humboldt, Alexander von 72  
hymenium 31, 32, 33, 35  
hyphae 36  
funiculus 41  
plant parasites 115  
stromata 48  
Hypocreales 84–5, 88, 92, 94, 130, 160  
hypogeous fungi 43  
*Hypomyces lactifluorum* 130–1  
hypovirulence 25, 141

**I**

imperfect fungi *see* deuteromycetes  
insects 43–6, 48, 50, 74  
ambrosia beetles 46, 175  
ants 85, 175, 177, 198, 226  
Aquatic Mushroom 58  
farming 46, 175–9, 198  
honeydew 107  
"mind control" 84–5  
Mossy Maze Polypore 194  
mutualisms 174–5  
stinkhorns 54  
termites 175, 176, 177, 198  
wood-boring 46, 101, 178  
invasive species 228–9  
ionizing radiation 69

**J**

Janzen, Dan 174

**K**

keratin 109, 110, 126

**L**

Laboulbeniales 196  
Lasso Fungi 234–5  
lawns 106, 128  
leaves 104–6  
*Lentinula edodes* 36, 103, 238–9  
lichens 69, 172, 188–93, 200–1  
lignin 102–3  
ligninolysis 74–5  
Little Brown Bats 140–1  
living fossils 149, 191  
Lobster Mushroom 130–1  
*Lophodermium pinastri* 86–7, 104  
luciferin 74

**M**

*Malassezia* 112  
*Marasmius crinis-equi* 104  
*Marasmius oreades* 106, 128–9  
marine environments 16, 136, 164  
*Massospora cicadina* 85, 96–7  
meadow mushrooms 106  
medicine 76, 78, 92, 193, 218  
*Megacollybia* 117  
melanins 68–70  
Meselson, Matthew 94  
*Metarhizium acridum* 226  
*Metarhizium anisopliae* 225, 226  
microfungi 69  
Microsporidia 21  
Millardet, Pierre Marie Alexis 162  
mimicry 48–51, 60  
"mind control" 67, 84–5  
monocious fungi 119  
*Monilinia fructicola* 69  
*Monilinia vaccinii-corymbosi* 50  
*Morchella* 142  
morels 142, 217  
Mossy Maze Polypore 194–5

# INDEX

- mutualism 12, 22, 24–5, 48, 101, 170–205  
mycangia 46  
mycelial network 184–5  
*Mycena* 72, 75  
mycoheterotrophs 187  
mycorrhizae 6, 8, 17, 180–7  
  arbuscular 183, 210–11, 213  
Mycotoxin Producer 94–5  
mycotoxins 21, 88, 94, 200  
mycowood instruments 71
- N**
- Nebrodo Oyster Mushroom 240–1  
*Nectriopsis violacea* 168–9  
Needle Cast Fungus 86–7  
nematophagous fungi 234  
Noble, David 147, 149  
Noble Rot Fungus 232–3  
*Nothofagus* 79, 80, 122  
Nylander, William 192
- O**
- Omphalotus* 72  
*Onygena* 109  
*Onygena corvina* 126  
*Onygena equina* 126–7  
Onygenales 109, 110, 126  
oomycetes 145, 154, 162  
*Ophiocordyceps sinensis* 92–3  
*Ophiocordyceps unilateralis* 85  
*Ophiostoma ulmi* 25, 143–5  
orchids 51, 187  
otoliths 36  
Ötzi the cadaver 90  
Oyster Mushroom 240–1
- P**
- paclitaxel 184  
*Palaeoagaricites antiquus* 17  
pandemics 134–69  
*Pandora formicae* 85  
*Panellus* 72  
*Panellus stipticus* 74  
Paracelsus 76  
*Paracoccidioides* 112  
parasites 12, 98–133, 187  
  of animals 21, 110–13  
  coevolution 174  
  of fungi 24  
  of plants 21, 114–21  
pathogens 12, 24–5, 46, 48, 50, 52, 86, 90, 101, 112, 185, 202, 226  
  of humans 110, 112  
melanins 68, 69  
  “mind control” 67, 84–5  
  pandemics 134–69  
  of plants 114–21  
*Paurocotylis pila* 60–1  
Peck, Charles Horton 85  
*Penicillium* 69  
peridioles 40–1, 56  
Phallales *see* stinkhorns  
*Phallus indusiatus* 54–5  
*Phanerochaete chrysosporium* 103  
*Phlebia gigantea* 226  
*Phlebopus portentosus* 178–9  
*Phoenicaulis* Rust 52–3  
phoenicoid fungi 217  
*Pholiota highlandensis* 217  
phototropism 36, 62  
*Physisporinus vitreus* 71  
*Phytophthora* 138  
*Phytophthora cinnamomi* 149  
*Phytophthora infestans* 154–7  
*Phytophthora ramorum* 145, 147  
*Pilobolus* 41  
*Pilobolus crystallinus* 22, 62–3  
*Piptoporus betulinus* 90  
plants  
  epiparasites 187  
  growth regulators 115  
  mutualisms 180–7  
  parasites 114–21  
*Plasmopara viticola* 162–3  
*Pleurotus nebrodensis* 240–1  
Pöldmaa, Kadri 160  
pollination 48, 50, 51, 124  
polypore fungi 36, 70, 90–1, 103, 104, 117, 194  
*Polyponus brunalis* 36  
*Porodaedalea pini* 202–3  
Potato Late Blight 136, 138, 154–7  
prions 24  
*Protomyces electra* 17  
*Psathyrella aquatica* 58–9  
pseudoflowers 48, 50, 52, 115  
*Pseudogymnoascus destructans* 140–1  
pseudopollination 48, 52  
pseudosclerotial plates 70  
*Puccinia coronata avenae* 119  
*Puccinia graminis tritici* 119–20  
*Puccinia monoica* 52–3  
puffballs 33, 40  
pyrophilous fungi 217
- R**
- radiation 69  
Reagan, Ronald 94  
Reboleira, Ana Sofia 196  
Red List species 220, 240  
Red Ring Rot 202  
reproduction 28–63, 67  
respiration 102  
resupinate fungi 44  
rhizoids 138  
rhizomorphs 68, 72, 104, 106, 117  
*Rhizopus stolonifer* 22  
rhizosphere 210  
ringworm 110  
rose handler's disease 112  
rosetting 115  
*Russula* 130  
rusts 52–3, 119–21, 152–3
- S**
- sac fungi *see* ascomycetes  
*Saccharomyces cerevisiae* 78–9  
*Saccharomyces eubayanus* 79  
*Saccharomyces pastorianus* 78–9  
Sagara, Naohiko 109  
St. Anthony's fire 48, 49  
St. George's Mushroom 166–7  
Salem Witch trials 88, 150  
saprobes 12, 24, 54, 90, 98–133, 140, 181  
sarcophilous fungi 109  
Scarlet Berry Truffle 60–1  
Schwarz, Marie Beatrice “Bea” 143  
sclerotia 50, 88  
sea fans 136  
*Serpula lacrymans* 230–1  
shelf fungi 14, 104, 160, 202  
shiitake mushrooms 36, 103, 226, 238  
Slime Mold Eater 168–9  
smuts 119, 124–5  
sooty molds 107  
spermatia 48, 52  
*Sphaerobolus stellatus* 56–7  
*Spilocaea pomi* 119  
sporangia 62  
Spore Eater 160–1  
spores 30–63, 69, 74, 75  
sporidia 124  
sporocarps 43  
*Sporophagomyces chrysostomus* 160–1  
*Sporormiella* 106–7  
*Sporothrix schenckii* 112  
Spribille, Toby 200  
*Stereum* 24  
sterigma 32  
stinkhorns 40, 44, 54–5  
Stradivarius violins 71  
Sudden Oak Death (SOD) 145, 147  
summit disease 85  
symbiosis 101, 170–205  
  arbuscular mycorrhizas 210  
  *Choanephora* 50  
  insects 46  
  *Massospora cicadina* 96

## T

teliospores 124  
termites 175, 176, 177, 198  
*Termitomyces* 177  
*Termitomyces titanicus* 198–9  
thermotolerance 25  
thrush 112  
Tinder Polypore 90–1  
Titan Mushroom 198–9  
Tokay wines 83, 232  
*Tomentella subulilacina* 44  
tooth fungus 220  
toxins 21, 76–83, 88, 94, 200  
    *Candida albicans* 112  
    Mycotoxin Producer 94  
*Tremella* 24  
*Trichoderma harzianum* 226  
*Trichoderma reesei* 224  
*Tricholoma gambosa* 166–7  
trichothecenes 94  
truffles 33, 43, 60

## U

Upside Down Puffball 40  
*Ustilago maydis* 124–5

## V

Vasquez, Gianrico 240  
*Venturia inaequalis* 117–19  
Vietnam War 94  
violins 71  
viruses 24–5

## W

Westerdijk, Johanna 143  
Wheat Stem Rust 119  
White Pine Blister Rust  
    120–1  
white rot fungi 74–5, 90,  
    103–4, 178  
White-nose Syndrome (WNS)  
    140–1  
wildfires 213–17  
Wine Cellar Mold 83

wine industry 83, 162, 232  
Witch's Butter 24  
Wollemi Pine 148–9  
wood 101–4  
    Chestnut Blight 141  
    Conifer Maze Conk 202  
    *Cryphonectria parasitica* 136  
    Dry Rot Fungus 230  
    Dutch Elm Disease 25,  
    142–5  
    Green Stain 132  
    insect farmers 46, 177, 178  
    ligninolysis 74–5  
    mosaic forests 216  
    Mossy Maze Polypore 194  
    spalting 70, 90  
Sudden Oak Death 145, 147  
wood-boring insects 46, 101,  
    178  
wood-wide web 185, 187

## X

*Xylaria* 104  
*Xylaria longipes* 71  
xylophagous insects 46

## Y

yeast 78–83  
yellow morels 142

## Z

*Zasmidium cellare* 83, 232  
zombification 67, 85  
zoochory 42–7, 60  
zoospores 21, 116, 138–9, 154  
zygomycetes 18, 22, 50, 62, 84,  
    96