



Philip Carpenter, PhD Harry and Elsie Knighton Service Award Nomination 2023

Dr. Philip Carpenter has made extraordinary contributions to the Fungus Federation of Santa Cruz and the greater community well prior to our founding in 1984 to the present. A respected leader, Phil has worn many hats in our organization, often simultaneously! A gifted teacher, he generously shares his time, knowledge, and enthusiasm with all, from the very basic “Can I eat it?” queries to detailed points of identification. A multiple term Prime Minister (president), Phil has led with intelligence, wit, and heart. He has for many years arranged programs and speakers for our monthly meetings. As NAMA representative, Phil has made connections enabling us to book a diverse group of speakers for our membership meetings and the Fungus Fair.

In his role as Science Advisor for over two decades, he has provided mushroom ID at general meetings and forays. Phil also serves as co-chair of our much-loved Fungus Fair, where he leads the Taxonomy Table and gives talks to the public. He has been a key figure in staging the fair since 1979.

It’s hard to overstate Phil’s unfailing contributions to the FFSC. The most significant contributions have been in taxonomy and education. The long list includes maintaining our Hotline, fielding questions from the public (see “can I eat it?” above), Emergency Departments and veterinary clinics to identify ingested fungi. As Science Advisor he teaches ID classes, shifting gears to Virtual Foray mode and online Zoom ID classes in response to the pandemic. He is now happily back to teaching in person! He leads classes and forays for the FFSC, the University of California at Santa Cruz and the County of Santa Cruz, among others.

Phil has also worked in collaboration with Christian Schwarz and the Norris Center at UCSC to establish an herbarium of California mycota with emphasis on the Santa Cruz area. Once the growing collection had a good home, Phil rallied our club to kickstart funding for the UCSC Fungal Herbarium Sequencing Project.

He has served as organizer and foray leader for the Santa Cruz Mycoflora Foray as well as the 1998 NAMA Foray at Asilomar and several NAMA regional forays held in Mendocino.

There are so many reasons to appreciate and revere this man. We’ve attached personal notes to help convey the breadth and depth of the impact Phil has had on our local mycological community. We firmly believe he is most deserving of the Harry and Elsie Knighton Award.

The Fungus Federation of Santa Cruz





Comments from FFSC member Christian Schwarz:

It is nearly impossible to overstate the importance of the role Phil Carpenter has played in my journey in the world of mushroomers and mycology.

I remember the exact moment I met him: It was late summer, and I had walked down the hill from UC Santa Cruz to a general meeting of the Fungus Federation. He was standing at the ID table, and I presented him with what seemed to me to be an out-of-season bolete. Much to my surprise, he took it from my hands and without hesitation bit directly into it. A few seconds later he spit out the chunk, exclaiming: "Bitter! marshii!" I was dazzled, and a friendship was instantly formed.

*Before I owned a car, Phil gave me rides to long-distance forays – I saw my first *Amanita muscaria* in Mendocino. When it came time to learn to drive, Phil taught me to lurch around the parking lot in his stick-shift truck. When Phil needed an assistant leading foraging trips for the University Rec department, he asked me to help – which pushed me to develop my knowledge and gave me a forum to learn natural history communication skills. For many college students at UCSC, Phil was the guide on their first-ever mushroom hunt.*

Phil has always been exceptionally generous with his time, his knowledge, his willingness to teach anyone and everyone, especially complete beginners – and always with a friendly, approachable attitude. Phil's advocacy was instrumental in revitalizing the UCSC fungal collections, and in undertaking one of the first major community science-led DNA sequencing projects in the country. The impact of Phil's decades of involvement with the Santa Cruz and California mycological communities has been profound. I will forever be indebted to him for his mentorship and friendship.

Email from FFSC member John Leekley:

Hey Phil... thanks for letting me tag along today up to the Big Creek Lumber property, it was great fun to explore an area I've never been and may never be again. I thought you were amazing with those students... patient, gentle, thoughtful with their endless questions (I thought I would have worn you out with my own annoying questions during the last year).

You could see their enthusiasm and excitement build during the day as they found all kinds of cool stuff to see and keep and eat. And that last part was especially fascinating. That you would hunker down on your knees in the drizzle, after hours up and down the hills of this rugged area, in the middle of nowhere outside this gate, and patiently cook seven or so different edible mushrooms and let them compare the flavors of the wild mushrooms that they themselves had collected. The ancient societal fears melted away, giving way to confidence and a determination to learn more. Remarkable really, a great teaching device. Many passionate "fun guys" were made today. And Christian was, as always, awesome... the cool David Arora for his generation (although nothing will ever replace the original, a true one of a kind human being).

The seven mushrooms you prepared were...

Boletus edulis

Chroogomphus vinicolor

Lactarius deliciosus

Agaricus subrutilescens

Amanita pachycolea

Suillus pungens

Clitopilus prunulus



And Christian says we found around 55 species, which is pretty good. It was a great foray, something you have done countless times over many, many years. The FFSC is extraordinarily lucky to have you as our Prime Minister.

Hail the Prime Minister!

Best as always,
John

Note from FFSC Minister of Programs Peter Mu

Years ago my friend David and I hiked often in the Santa Cruz mountains, and occasionally we would find various kinds of mushrooms growing in the forest. One day I don't know what got into us, but ... instead of kicking and stomping on them we found ourselves asking each other "...hey, if you ate this stuff will it kill you?" "Well," said David, "I know just the guy." That day we scavenged a full bag of mushrooms and came to visit the mushroom fairy who lived in the woods and that turned out to be Phil Carpenter. His eyes lit up when he saw our mushroom and began immediately calling out the names of all the different species. Well, none of that made any sense to us at the time, but I can never forget how he made me feel. Collecting this stuff is really fun and it can make you sound smart, too! Just like that, we were hooked.

Phil Carpenter connects to people in a way to bring out their curiosity and imagination. He is a true science educator and a community leader.

