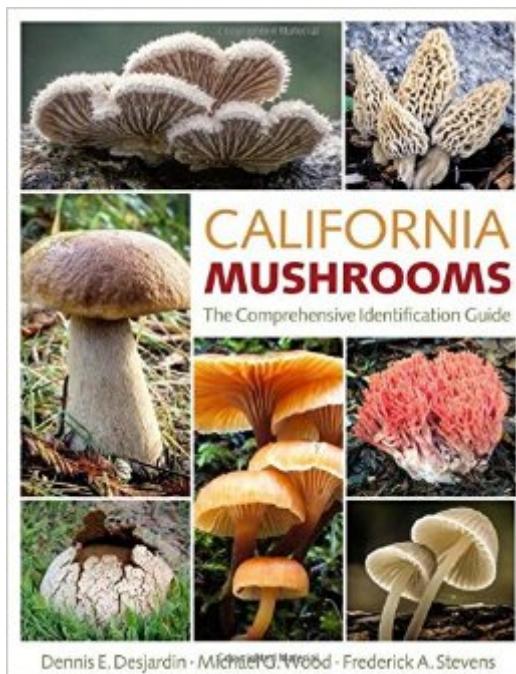


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# California Mushrooms: The Comprehensive Identification Guide



## Synopsis

Winner of the CBHL Award of Excellence California is one of the most ecologically rich and diverse regions of North America, and home to hundreds of species of mushrooms. In California Mushrooms, mycologist experts Dennis Desjardin, Michael Wood, and Fred Stevens provide over 1100 species profiles, including comprehensive descriptions and spectacular photographs. Each profile includes information on macro- and micromorphology, habitat, edibility, and comparisons with closely related species and potential look-alikes. Although the focus of the book is on mushrooms of California, over 90% of the species treated occur elsewhere, making the book useful throughout western North America. This complete reference covers everything necessary for the mushroom hunter to accurately identify over 650 species.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

California Mushrooms is the best field guide published in a decade. I say field guide loosely as it is much too heavy to haul around in the field. But don't be put off by that. Most mushroom identification happens after the hunt, at home in a quiet space. The introductory material is thorough, easy to understand, and leads one with confidence into the keys. The keys are logical and clear. The photograph which accompanys each described mushroom is true to life. This alone makes the book worth every penny. I have been a mushroom hunter for 34 years, and a member of the Fungus Federation of Santa Cruz Governing board. Even with so much experience, positive identification can be elusive. While as previous reviewers have said, no one book can do it all,

California Mushrooms comes very close. In the last 10 years, new field guides available in the U.S. have described species found largely in the eastern states, and very little new work was available specifically for the western states.

This is not a completely unbiased review since the authors are friends, and I did get a free copy for providing one photo that was used in the book. However, I teach a mushroom course and bought four more copies of this book figuring that I would need some extras. I also recommended it as one of the options for students to buy and use in the course. I have just started to use it myself and in the class, and so far I'm very happy with it. More importantly students seem happy with it and are able to use it to identify mushrooms that they have not seen before. The quick summary is that the photos are beautiful, the keys generally work well, and the mushrooms included in it seem to be all the most common ones in our area. I especially like the coverage of the mycenoid mushrooms and *Agaricus* species, and inclusion of some of the distinctive crust fungi. Of course it does not have everything in it, and name changes have occurred since it went to press, but this can be said of all mushroom field guides. Nevertheless, I would still rank it as the best option available for our area, and I recommend it to anyone interested in learning California mushrooms.

For a California mycophile Professor Desjardin has laid a treasure in my lap. Now after three years of drought I need rain to put it to use. In Marin county last year I probably managed to find about 20 species of mushroom over the entire season while my buddy Bob Stewart up in Arcata approached 200. If I had a coffee table I would but "California Mushrooms" on it. Because, despite the seasonally-so-far lack of shrooms, I pick it up and read through one section after another. I wonder whether the older standard reference book we all know will fade. (I lobby its author to bring it up to date.) Of course our professor author needs not resort to humor as his predecessor did, but I would have like a little more help with synonyms. That is what us old guys, who learned taxonomy a while ago, now use as an excuse to use older claudistics which can be applied in the field to identify species. This is not a problem in this book. But more synonyms by way of common names and confused scientific names would have been useful. The pictures in the book are excellent. It doesn't quite match the weight of "Lichens of North America," but maybe equals Jespson's flora for which people had handy cloth carrying cases. I wonder if the publisher will reduce it too a handbook to carry in the field. This book is a must for shroomers in California. Charlie Fisher, author of "Meditation in the Wild" and "Dismantling Discontent."

This is an utterly amazing field guide. The photography and descriptions are excellent. The dichotomous keys are clear and accurate. Perhaps best of all, the taxonomy is modern. As another poster wrote, this is a major upgrade to Arora's *Mushrooms Demystified* and is now my go-to for identification.

**California Mushrooms: The Comprehensive Identification Guide** Dennis E. Desjardin, Michael G. Wood, and Frederick A. Stevens Book™s website: [www.californiamushrooms.us](http://www.californiamushrooms.us) Among the United States, California is first in population, third in area, third in miles of coastline, has the highest and lowest points in the contiguous U.S., the southernmost glacier, and more forestland than any other state except Alaska. It is no wonder then that there are eight mushroom clubs in California. With conditions ranging from subarctic in the mountains to subtropical in the south there are plenty of habitats for mushrooms to populate. The Mediterranean climate in much of the state supports many interesting and also endemic fungi. This new book *California Mushrooms* by Desjardin, Wood, and Stevens shows the beauty and diversity of the state™s mushrooms and the subtitle "The Comprehensive Identification Guide" is well-deserved. The 650 species descriptions include comments for an additional 475 similar species in California. The fungi selected represent common species, species from a variety of habitats, species described from or endemic to California, and ones having quality photos. The gilled mushrooms take up 310 of the 560 pages. The rest of the fungi are a good selection of the boletes and other macro-fungi. Slime molds and lichens are not included. The excellent Michael Wood & Fred Stevens website, *The Fungi of California* ([www.mykoweb.com/CAF/](http://www.mykoweb.com/CAF/)) has similar coverage of 670 species. The new book is not a copy; it has updated content and has species descriptions absent from the website. Book lovers take note, this is a hefty tome with cover dimensions of 8.8" x 11.3" x 1.4" and weight of 4.64 pounds. The species descriptions follow traditional morphological groups from light-spored gilled mushrooms at the start to truffles and false truffles at the end. Each group has a key to the described species. Unlike the long keys of Arora™s *Mushrooms Demystified* (1981), the related or similar species discussed in the comments are not included in the keys. There are some interesting deviations from the norm, such as placing the descriptions for the *Hypomyces* species after that of their hosts. There are one or two photos per page, one per species. Descriptions range from a half to a full page. Photos are generally excellent with great color reproduction. You are sure to find mushrooms here that you were not aware of (e.g., *Rimbachia*, *Veluticeps*) or perhaps you may finally identify those crusts lurking in your local woods (e.g.,

Byssomerulius, Ceriporia). This book is focused on California but of value for the West Coast and can be useful as an extra reference for those in the East. Many of the mushrooms are found across the country in suitable habitats. The details on macro- and micromorphology are for what is observed in California specimens. The distribution comments and habitat mostly apply to California or the West Coast. The known, or in some cases unknown, status regarding edibility is given with each description. The microscopic characters are described and also used in the keys when needed. The index does not list species names by epithet (zelleri, *Boletus*) but does include synonyms (*Boletus zelleri*) and common names. A glossary covers the terms used in the book. The introduction has good coverage of the biology, ecology, edibility, as well as where to look, how to collect, and how to identify mushrooms. In the introduction the authors discuss their usage of names in relation to ongoing research and taxonomic change. There is an excellent four page discussion of nomenclature (based on rules), taxonomy (done by consensus), morphology (observed characters), and phylogeny (evolutionary relationships). The authors of the species names are given along with recent synonyms and misapplied names. Common names are given when they are widely accepted. A debatable practice is the usage and publication of unpublished (provisional) names (nom. prov.) and combinations (comb. prov.). These are new species and transfers to different genera that are not formally published and as such have no status. At least in this book they are marked as such, which should avoid nomenclatural problems. Two of these new combinations are now published and listed on [www.californiamushrooms.us](http://www.californiamushrooms.us), *Lactarius rubidus* and *Xerocomellus dryophilus*. The awesome text box “What’s in a name?” untangles several knots to explain their use of *Amanita calyptroderma*; see page 93. A minor point that applies to all published guides is that between the time of manuscript preparation and book release there may be changes or updates in names and species concepts, or they are simply unknown to the authors. Here are two examples of the few that I noticed. *Polyporus varius* is mentioned as a separate species from *Polyporus leptocephalus* (*P. elegans*) rather than a synonym; the fault is with the synonymy mess on Species Fungorum. The description and photo for *Exidia glandulosa* appears to represent *Exidia nigricans*; this clarification in species concepts by P. Roberts (2009) has not made it into American guides. But the book clearly pays attention to taxonomic details. One example, page 176, is *Laccaria laccata* var. *pallidifolia* (Peck) Peck, a cumbersome name that resulted when the later designation of a type specimen for the species turned out to be a less common variety. If you are a mushroomer on the West Coast or need a reason to visit California, I see no reason not to get this book; it is a bargain even at retail. If you collect mushroom books then you probably bought it already. For the rest of you it is worth your consideration. Visit Michael Wood’s website for

the book, [www.californiamushrooms.us](http://www.californiamushrooms.us), to see sample descriptions and photos, as well as name changes (24) and errata (none), and a calendar of talks by the authors.-Patrick R. Leacock(Review originally published in FUNGI, 2015, vol 8 no.4.)

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