

A Close-Up Photo Study of a Mature Forest: Part 1

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In the article, "[Ecological Succession](#)" ([September 2024](#)), we saw how an old growth forest comes to be. This edition features photo essays showcasing some of the plant and fungal species that live in Northern Virginia's older growth forests. Part 1 takes a macroscopic approach at viewing soil microbes—the ecosystem's foundation. Mushrooms are the fruiting bodies from the vast, microscopic network of fungal threads (aka hyphae). A quick survey of the mushrooms present gives an idea of the soil's biodiversity. The mushrooms here emerge from the ground or grow on logs—the latter is converting that wood into soil. All mushrooms were in a small, healthy, undisclosed, mature forest and photographed near [official trails](#), so appreciating such vast biodiversity can be done from pathways without trekking off-trail and disturbing the woodlands. There are no statements about edibility since mushroom identification requires expert knowledge including subtleties such as spore color and the tree species from which the log originated.

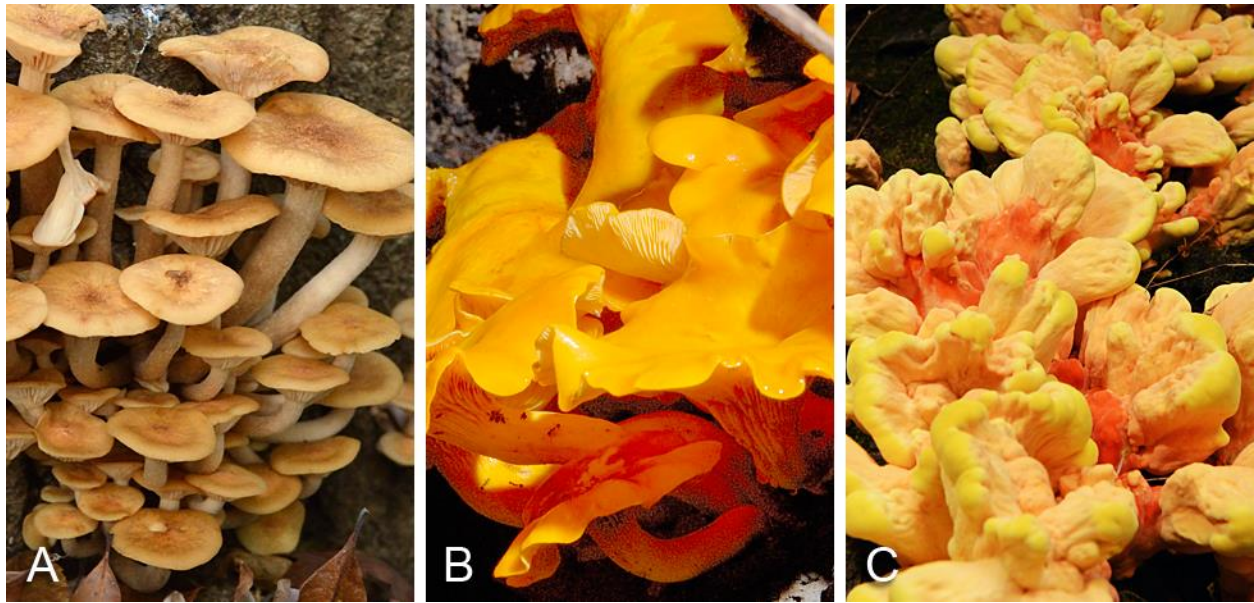


Figure 1. (A) Ringless honey mushroom (*Armillaria tabescens*), (B) jack-o'-lantern mushroom (*Omphalotus olearius*), and (C) chicken-of-the-woods (*Laetiporus sulphureus*), recently emerged specimens.



Figure 2. (A) Lion's mane (*Hericium erinaceus*), (B) parrot mushroom (*Gliophorus psittacinus perplexa*), and (C) viscid violet cort (*Cortinarius iodes*) with smaller, unidentified mushroom on the left.

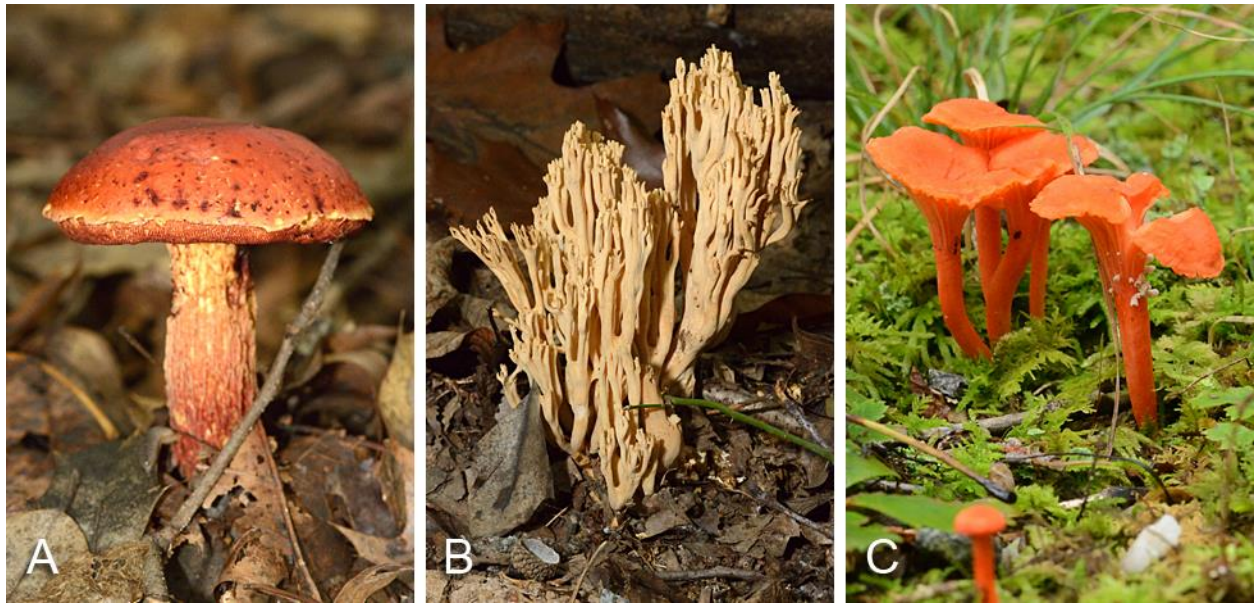


Figure 3. (A) Frost's bolete (*Exsudoporus frostii*, formerly *Boletus frostii*), (B) strict-branch coral mushroom (*Ramaria stricta*), and (C) red chanterelle (*Cantharellus cinnabarinus*).

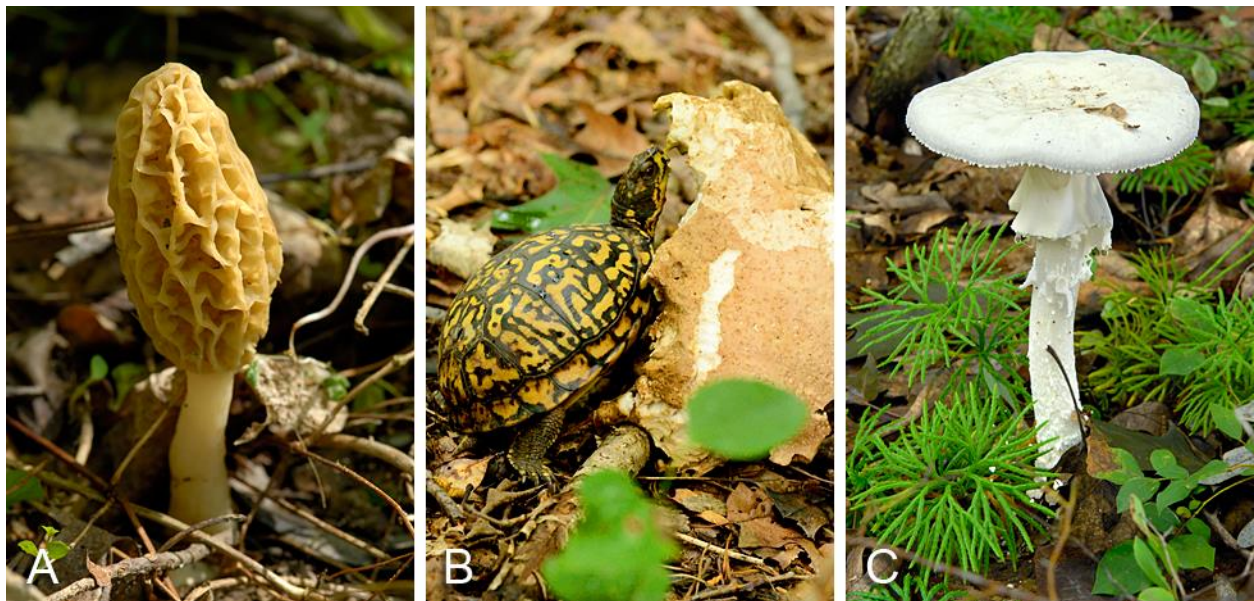


Figure 4. (A) Yellow morel (*Morchella esculenta*), (B) eastern or woodland box turtle (*Terrapene carolina carolina*) eating a bolete mushroom (family: Boletaceae), and (C) eastern destroying angel (*Amanita bisporigera*) growing amongst fan clubmoss or common running-pine (*Diphasiastrum digitatum*, formerly *Lycopodium digitatum*).

[Part 2](#) delves into some of the plants inhabiting mature forests.

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