

*Situated knowledge and fungal conservation: Morel mushroom management in the mid-Atlantic region of the United States*

Barron, Elizabeth (2010)

Abstract: Using Local Ecological Knowledge to Assess Morel Decline in the U.S. Mid-Atlantic Region. Morels (*Morchella* spp.) are prized wild edible mushrooms. In the United States, morels are the focus of family traditions, local festivals, mycological society forays, and social media, as well as substantial commercial trade. A majority of the anglophone research on morels has been conducted in Europe and in the U.S. Pacific Northwest and Midwest. This literature provides insights into a diverse and plastic genus, but much of its biology and ecology remains a mystery. In 2004, we initiated a study of morel mushroom harvesting in the U.S. Mid-Atlantic region in response to concerns that morels might be in decline in the national parks in that area. This paper presents results from that research with an emphasis on morel hunters' local ecological knowledge of morel types, phenology, habitat, vegetative associations, and responses to disturbance. We conclude that experienced morel harvesters possess local ecological knowledge that complements scientific knowledge and can increase our understanding of the complex and regionally variable ecology of *Morchella* and inform conservation efforts.