

Master's degree project in ethnomycology with field work in Benin

In this project, you will conduct interviews with people who live in villages near the border of the *Forêt Classifiée de l'Ouémé Supérieur* (Upper Oueme River Forest Reserve) in central Benin, West Africa, in order to learn about their use of wild mushrooms as food and medicine, and about traditional ecological knowledge of the habitats and climate conditions favored by different species.

The majority of wild edible mushrooms in Benin are produced by ectomycorrhizal (ECM) fungi. ECM fungi are also some of the most prized mushrooms in the northern temperate region, and include e.g. *Cantharellus cibarius* (chanterelle / kantarell) and *Boletus edulis* (king bolete / karljohansopp). ECM fungi live in symbiotic association with certain species of trees, which they provide with water and nutrients in exchange for sugars. Because of this association, ECM fungi are difficult to cultivate, and are harvested almost exclusively from the wild.



Women with edible wild mushrooms in Sonnoumon village, Benin

In the savanna woodlands of West Africa, the peak time for mushrooms is near the beginning of the rainy season in late June to early August, when crops have been planted but are not yet ready to harvest. They can thus provide an important supplementary food source for people at this time of the year. The sustainable harvest of wild edible mushrooms may even provide more long-term economic benefit to local inhabitants than cutting trees to sell as wood or charcoal.

The successful applicant will have the opportunity to:

- Join a collaborative effort between ethnobotanists and mycologists in the Systematic Biology department at the Evolutionary Biology Center at Uppsala University.
- Do field work in West Africa in the summer of 2017.
- Study how people find, identify, and use wild mushrooms in central Benin.
- Collaborate with Beninese researchers from the University of Parakou.
- Define the specific focus of your project according to your interests.

The project is suitable for an MSc degree project, and applicants from Swedish universities are also encouraged to apply for a MFS (Minor Field Study) grant from the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida).

- Open to master's students from relevant disciplines. (Biology, Anthropology, African Studies, etc.)
- Applicants must be fluent in English.
- Proficiency in spoken French is beneficial, but not required.
- General familiarity with mushroom identification is beneficial, but not required.
- Apply by March 5, 2017. Include a short statement of why you are interested in the project, relevant qualifications, and a brief CV.

For more information or to apply, contact Brendan Furneaux at:

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