



Waxcap Mushrooms of Eastern North America

By Alan Bessette

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Members of the Hygrophoraceae family, commonly known as waxcaps, have long attracted the attention of mycologists and nature lovers. As a group, they are beautiful mushrooms. Those in the genus *Hygrocybe* are particularly colorful and eye-catching. Many waxcaps can be identified from field observations and macroscopic features of the fruiting bodies, further adding to their appeal for those lacking formal training in mycology.

Waxcaps are usually well represented in general mushroom field guides. There have also been thorough scientific treatments of the North American species. Excellent as these works may be, they are not comprehensive, nontechnical guides that illustrate the eastern North American waxcaps in color. The work presented here is not intended to be a scientific treatment of the Hygrophoraceae; rather, it fills a gap between the sporadic coverage in general mushroom field guides and the more inclusive technical monographs that typically lack color illustrations.

The geographical range of coverage includes eastern Canada, the United States east of the Great Plains and south to East Texas, the Gulf Coast, and Florida. Although the distribution of species is constantly being expanded as knowledge accumulates, most waxcaps that occur within this region are featured or discussed.

With over 150 color illustrations and detailed descriptions, this book is an indispensable reference guide for waxcap identification.

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Editorial Review

Review

The Hygrophoraceae family of mushrooms, often called 'waxcaps,' is well-known among amateurs and professionals because of its striking colors, stature, and general noticeability in the forest. This beautiful book is certainly the most complete field guide to this group of mushrooms in eastern North America. Bessette (emer., Utica College) and coauthors are all well-known mycologists, specializing in mushrooms, who have previously authored several other popular books on other groups of mushrooms. The introductory material is brief but appropriate for a field guide treatment of a rather specific, limited group of fungi. The principle sections are made up of the species descriptions and color photographs. The photos are perhaps the best collection of pictures of the Hygrophoraceae that has ever been assembled in print, at least of those species occurring in North America, and are very important for species identification. Approximately 160 species are treated; the fruiting body descriptions are thorough and scientific, complete with spore size and shape, taxonomic authority, synonyms, and etymology, making the book useful for a wide audience. A glossary, a list of additional readings, and an index to common and scientific names support the text. Overall, a very usable and beautiful book for both amateur and professional mushroom enthusiasts. Summing Up: Highly recommended. All levels/libraries. --D. L. Richter, CHOICE Review 2012

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