

NAMA Voucher Collection Project: Duties, 2019

There are 3 documents detailing the Voucher Program:

1. “Voucher Program Duties” is for the Voucher Program Committee staff. It describes the duties of the Chair of the committee or the designated Coordinator (voucher person in charge of running the program at the foray). Also lists duties to be done after the foray at the herbarium for specimen and data processing.
2. “Voucher Program Procedures” is for the voucher staff and foray mycologists. It outlines the process and suggestions for during the foray.
3. “Voucher Program Handout” is a description of the voucher process for foray participants. It should be distributed to them by email or at start of foray.

Duties before the Annual Foray

- Solicit potential supported graduate students for working at the foray and ensure that they and other voucher staff register for the foray. Send this list of people to the foray registrar and treasurer so they can track registration funds.
- Communicate with the foray organizers on the space needs and supplies. This includes the size of the work area and display room. The number of tables needed. Computers, printer, driers needed.
- Communicate with the foray organizers on the need for them to ask for volunteers to work with the voucher program and display room process.
- Before they are printed by the foray organizers, ensure that the layout and content design of the field labels is sufficient for collecting the data needed.
- Ship driers and equipment as necessary.
- Purchase needed supplies, highlighter pens, re-sealable bags (Ziploc).
- Prepare the database system for the foray. This includes requesting the location details, latitude, longitude, for each of the planned walks.
- Research, select, print, cut, alphabetize species name slips for display.
- Pack supplies for the foray.
- Before or at the foray, obtain list of all participants (for spelling of full names).

Duties during the Annual Foray

See the Voucher Program Procedures document for further detailed information. These duties are carried out with the assistance of the voucher staff, supported students, and volunteers. The Foray Recorder focuses on the voucher database work.

- Set up the work area, computer, dryers, and supplies for the voucher program.
- Assist and provide input on the set up of the display tables.
- Supervise and instruct student, volunteer, and staff workers.
- Make a list of the full legal names for all identifiers at the foray, and their initials.
- Provide foray mycologists and voucher workers with a copy of the Voucher Program Procedures. Foray participants should have access to the Voucher Program Handout, which preferably is distributed before the foray.

- Monitor all the table stations from foray drop off to display to assist and solve issues with bottlenecks, etc.
- Select identified and initialed specimens to become vouchers as they accumulate on the incoming voucher table. Funnel these specimens to the recorder giving priority to specimens that need faster processing or special handling.
- Supervise the recorder(s) and assist with database issues. Fill in as recorder when they are absent. Backup database regularly and double backups at end of foray.
- Supervise or fill in with the photography of vouchers. Backup the photos onto personal laptop and onto USB drive.
- Help collectors where needed in proper completion of the field labels for specimens. Get complete location data for non-walk collections.
- Edit the database “walks table” when the actual walks deviate from the initial plan. Add other locations that participants visit on their own.
- Work with mycologists who wish to save or split foray specimens.
- If time permits and a printer is provided, print out additional species name slips.
- Supervise each day the drying of voucher specimens. Dry as many vouchers as possible before Saturday evening to avoid a huge number at end of foray. Double check the display tables Saturday night and again Sunday morning that all voucher specimens have been dried or are bagged for drying after the foray. Specimens are always missed by volunteers. **You must personally and visually look at every label on the display tables to find the voucher specimens.**
- Lichens are air-dried in paper or wax bags. They are not placed on drier and do not go in plastic bags.
- Pack up equipment, supplies, and specimens.
- Arrange for someone to ship specimens and driers to museum.
- If specimens are not sent or taken Sunday morning then later in the day the bagged specimens need to be individually checked to find those not thoroughly dried. Molding of some specimens happens every year and should be avoided.

Duties after the Annual Foray

- When the voucher specimens arrive at the museum, go through each carefully to make sure they are completely dry. Where needed, do additional drying. Then freeze the batch of specimens for seven days (preventative against insects).
- Print out a master list of vouchers from the database. Check off each specimen in order to find which ones are missing. Mark those that are molded and discarded or other things of note. Mark those that are lichens as they will be processed separately in the herbarium (packaged differently). Add these notes to the database.
- For lichens and any voucher specimens that did not get processed through the Recorder during the foray, do that now. Add to database and photograph.

- Go through the stack of voucher field labels and carefully correct the data and add missing information in the voucher database.
- Verify and edit the “walks table” and the corresponding locations for each specimen record to make them complete and as accurate as possible.
- Re-unite the field labels, putting each in the correct bagged voucher.
- Correct the spelling and verify the consensus on the “current names” used for the species documented. Some of the names used might be provisional names. Try to figure out the author or source of the provisional name and note in the database. But provisional names have no status and are not printed on the herbarium field label, which only indicates the genus. The provisional name is put in the notes. Provisional names should not be used in the herbarium because this leads to future confusion. The usage of herbarium names is discouraged by the code of nomenclature and could conflict with the future validity of the same name when actually published later.
- Export the species list, add the statistics for the foray, and complete the annual report and species list for publication by NAMA. Send to NAMA.
- Export the voucher data and provide to herbarium staff.
- Field Museum collections staff are responsible for adding data and images to the museum’s online collections database, the boxing, labeling, accessioning of the voucher specimens. The museum provides this data to those doing DNA analysis.
- Provide input as needed when herbarium specimens are requested on loan to other institutions. Putting the data online leads to increased use of the specimens.

Suggestions made by mycologists in previous years to improve the voucher program. These apply to the program.

Photographic documentation

The staged images should not become a bottleneck, but photos should show more of the identifying features of the specimen. A checklist could be posted for specific genera where a customized photo would be better documentation than a “whole fruit body” image. If it would help, NAMA could fund a station with reflectors and lights to improve the quality of the images, but I do not approve of buying a camera that would end up being used two or three days a year.

Put the collection data online immediately

NAMA’s vast collections exist in data limbo. Photos and names should be uploaded as soon as they are available to an online database, such as MushroomObserver.org. All collections should be posted within a few months of the NAMA foray. People are willing to take this on and get the work done. There should not be delays.

[Fact: the volunteers that took this on did not get the work done in recent years.]

Suggestions made that do not apply to voucher project.

The following are examples of suggestions made to improve the foray. These are the responsibility of the foray organizers not the voucher program, though the voucher program can provide some input.

More instructions to collectors

Before the forays begin, we need to let attendees know what to do in the field and what to do when they return. This could be spelled out clearly at the Thursday evening session (use Powerpoint to illustrate). As a group leader at the last foray, I was given no instructions to pass along to my participants. People should be informed about local flora, so they can fill in tree associations on field labels. Taking time to briefly describe collections on the field label and complete basic information will help identifiers. When folks bring mushrooms back, post a sign with clear instructions about next steps in the process.

Provide identification tools

We need to ensure that identification tools are made available to both professional and amateur mycologists such as microscopes, reagents, and literature. An area should be designated for people who want to participate in the process, and assistance provided for professionals.

Strategic Identifiers

If the foray is to be held at a location where we might expect to find a large number of one particular genus, we need to bring in an expert who can identify collections in that area. This will greatly expand the number of species, and result in more accurate identifications.

Duties not applicable to the Voucher Program

The way to think about this is what duties occurred at NAMA forays before the introduction of the Voucher Program. The voucher process is overlaid on the top of the existing system of identification, recording, and display of the fungi.

- The printing of the field labels.
- The provision of paper plates, pencils, etc.
- The provision of the laminated family info signs for display.
- The provision of identification books, microscopes and related supplies.
- The supervision of the Chief Mycologist and other mycologists.