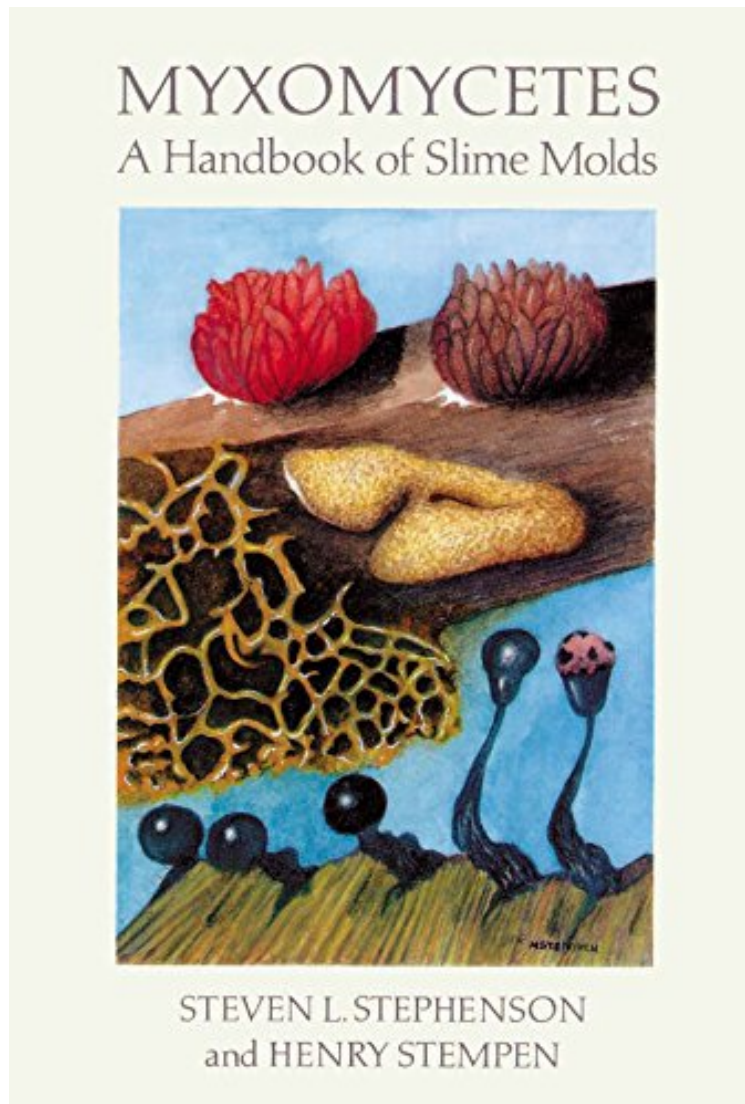


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Myxomycetes: A Handbook of Slime Molds

Steven L. Stephenson, Henry Stempen
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Steven L. Stephenson, Henry Stempen : Myxomycetes: A Handbook of Slime Molds before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Myxomycetes: A Handbook of Slime Molds:

6 of 6 people found the following review helpful. The Blob in real lifeBy Ashtar CommandDid you know that the classic horror movie "The Blob" is freely based on a true story?Well, *very* freely...Slime molds are a curious and often overlooked group of organisms, defying all attempts at classification. Are they fungi? Are they animals? Or something else entirely? Currently, most slime molds are believed to be related to amoebae. But then, what on earth is an amoeba? Previously classified as animals, they are now an independent "kingdom".Slime molds have a complicated

life cycle. Their most notorious phase is the plasmodium, actually a multinucleate cell. The plasmodium is bloblike, slimy and can become quite large (the size, say, of a mushroom). Also, it can move around. Often, the plasmodia are brightly coloured as well. This created quite a panic in a suburb of Dallas, Texas in 1973. The yellow plasmodia of the slime mold species *Fuligo septica* suddenly appeared on people's lawns, and when blasted with water, broke apart - with the parts continuing to slowly creep around, even getting somewhat bigger! Naturally, people panicked and assumed UFOs had something to do with it. Or had they just been watching "The Blob" too much? Eventually, the plasmodium settles down and becomes a fruiting body with spores. It's this strange life cycle, combining an amoeba-like stage and a fungus-like stage, which has long baffled researchers. "Myxomycetes" is a good introduction to these organisms. The book is intended as a field guide to 175 species of slime molds found in eastern North America, but since most species are cosmopolitan, the book can probably be used in Europe as well. It should be noted that all illustrations are in black and white. Many of these creatures are extremely small, and found only in decaying wood or litter. Still, it's a pity that no colour plates of the more dramatic species have been included (such as the previously mentioned *Fuligo septica*). Apart from the species presentations, "Myxomycetes" contain chapters on how to collect and study slime molds, their geographical distribution, and their ecology. There is also a reference section. Apparently, slime molds prefer the temperate region, being less abundant in the tropics. They can be found in deserts and in the hills, but they prefer woods where they grow on bark, litter or dung. Some insects have specialized in attacking slime molds, including the slime mold beetles and the slime mold fly (which, however, may help them spread the spores). In the Mexican state of Veracruz, some of the natives actually eat our old friend *Fuligo septica*! They call it "moon feces", while the preferred English term is "dog vomit". Personally, I just call it The Blob... Finally, a word of warning. This is a typical book for nerds. If you don't already have a strong interest in slime molds, fungi or perhaps amoebae, I don't think you will appreciate it. Buy a more popularized book on mushrooms first! However, if you are one of those nature-lovers who just love to poke around in the litter, or look under the bark of trees, "Myxomycetes" might come in handy.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. okay, let's face it ... By J. K. Quackenbush When the title includes the phrase 'Slime Molds' ... You have to already be predisposed to reading such a book ... but, if you are (and, even if you think you aren't ?!) You'll find this book informative and, if you give it a chance, captivating. I like this book ... and, believe it or not ... hunt these with the knowledge that I have this reference to help identify. Maybe not the top ten list ... but, worthwhile on any Naturalist's bookshelf.

14 of 15 people found the following review helpful. Not a field guide for a beginner By L. Brooks I was so excited to get this book, to finally be able to put a name to the blobs I'd seen in the woods, but it's promise to me as a field guide did not pan out. Be aware that the only color plates are the front and back covers, at least the one I purchased in December 2009. It is paperback with black and white line drawings of greatly enlarged reproductive structures and black and white photographs of what you'd see under a high-power microscope. There are no color photos of plasmodium, the blob stage that you can see with the naked eye, and scant illustrations of it. All that said, the illustrations are wonderful and there is good information in the book. Information and species descriptions are presented in a straightforward, factual manner that more advanced students will appreciate. It is not a collection of interesting field anecdotes or stories, though with the peculiarities of this group I did expect that. There is plenty of basis for a creative science writer to expound on these, but alas, my romance with slime was not to be. I'm sure other readers with more patience to figure things out on their own will find the book useful, but I admit I don't have the patience to scan all 54 species descriptions to find what I'm looking for. A key is provided, but it is based on the microscopic fruiting bodies, so for the layman it is useless. All I want to know is, what was that big neon orange blob I'd seen moving through the woods? I'm sorry to report that the answer escaped me in this book.

This book identifies all the species one is likely to encounter, with extensive information on their structural features, distribution, and ecological associations. Superbly illustrated, including keys, it is an introduction to their biology as well as a field guide.

Profusely illustrated . . . Most readable. -- Plant Talk, April 2000
The aim of this book is to introduce slime moulds to the public and this it does admirably. -- A. Feest, New Phytol, Vol 132 1996
This handbook goes a long way toward revealing the otherworldly beauty of the myxomycetes. -- HortIdeas, March 2000
This handbook should certainly stimulate interest and study of the myxomycetes. -- Vernon Ahmadjian, The Bryologist, Vol 98 1995
About the Author
Steven L. Stephenson, a professor at the University of Arkansas, has collected and studied fungi for more than thirty-five years, and his research program has taken him to all seven continents and every major type of terrestrial ecosystem.