

# HOW MUSHROOMS GROW

**If you want to see mushrooms, you should get out and about now. But if you want to see a mushroom in a whole new way, watch WUR scientist Tim Wijgerde's documentary *Dutch Mushrooms* about fly agarics, earth stars, stink agarics and more.**

Wijgerde is a marine biologist, but in his spare time he photographs and films 'everything that flies, crawls or swarms'. And the quality he produces bears comparison with famous BBC series. His latest production is a half-hour documentary, more like a vlog really, about Dutch mushrooms. Wijgerde takes the viewer to the Horsterwold woods in the Flevopolder (see: YouTube: Forest Vlog - Episode 12: Dutch Mushrooms).

The vlogs are the latest development in Wijgerde's oeuvre. Having started out as a photographer, he turned to time-lapse filming seven years ago. 'I saw a time-lapse video of coral on YouTube. I thought, hey, that's fun. If I take photos in series, I can make videos of processes.' The time lapse approach led to a transition to film and moving images.

A little over one year later, Wijgerde released *A reef by night and day*, a documentary chock-full of spectacular time-lapse footage of corals. 'Corals are animals,' Wijgerde explains, 'but because they are so static, they look more like plants. Everything in nature moves, but often on a different time scale than ours. That can make it seem very static, when it is actually very dynamic. You can capture that very well with time lapse footage.'

## Not at ease yet

Incidentally, the bulk of those coral images were not shot on the reef, but at home in the sea aquarium he had at the time. This method of working was born of necessity. 'That's how the BBC works too. It is hard to leave a camera on a reef for very long, with limited power supply. With mushrooms, you can do it sometimes, at least if they grow fast enough, like the common stink-horn. That comes out of the ground in three hours.'

The coral film was still a classic nature documentary



Fly agaric. ♦ Photo Tim Wijgerde

with a voiceover commentary. But in his vlogs, Wijgerde has a more visible presence. 'People like to see other people, they want a visible person who explains things,' he says. 'But it still feels strange to me. I'm not really at ease in front of a camera yet.'

Wijgerde works alone and is self-taught. 'I do everything myself: image, sound, editing. I never took a course. Just a lot of reading and searching on the internet! The images are razor-sharp, yet his equip-

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ment is fairly basic:

'They are just ordinary consumer cameras. Nikon SLRs, one 12 years old and one seven. With some Adobe software and a powerful computer, you

can achieve cinema quality. That coral film has been screened in several cinemas during film festivals.'

Despite the professional standard, it remains a hobby. 'But it is awfully time-consuming. I have spent over 200 hours on this mushroom film over the past three years.' So why does he do it? 'For pleasure. As a scientist, you spend a lot of time sitting indoors. Making films gives me an incentive to go out into nature and film. I really enjoy that combination of creativity and being out of doors.' RK