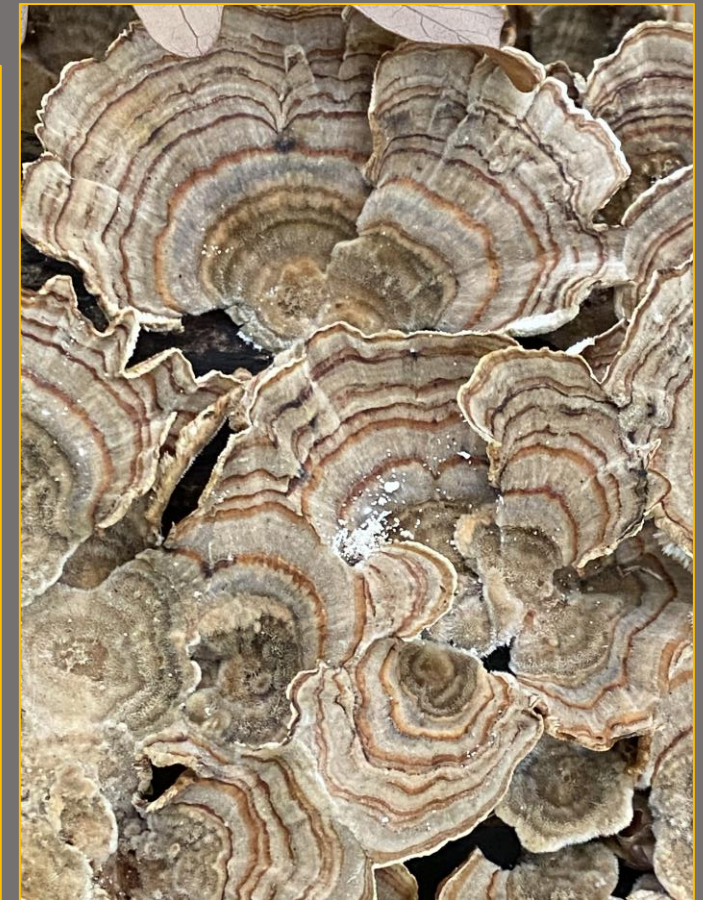


These photos are all of the same things at different magnifications. What are the “things” and what evidence do you have? What is the importance of these things to our environment and our lives?



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The “things” are mushrooms or fungi. Evidence could be that they are growing on a log on the forest floor (left photo). Other evidence could be comparison to another picture from a book or the internet. These are Turkey tail mushrooms (scientific name *Trametes versicolor*), growing on a downed tree log at The Morton Arboretum. Fungi, the more general term, get their nutrition by decomposing dead organisms. They secrete enzymes that break down dead stuff (called detritus). Fungi absorb nutrients from this detritus, but they also return nutrients into the soil as they decompose the dead organisms. This is nature’s recycling and it is crucial to the cycle of life!

