

EDUCATION

University of Michigan | Ann Arbor, MI (2019–present)
Predoctorate student in Ecology and Evolutionary Biology

University of Wisconsin–Madison | Madison, WI (2017–2019) **GPA**
MS in Agroecology 3.94

Swarthmore College | Swarthmore, PA (2012–2016) **GPA**
BA in Biology, minors in Latino & Latin American Studies and Spanish 3.87

AWARDS AND FELLOWSHIPS

Leo M. Leva Memorial Prize (May 2016)
Awarded \$800 by the Swarthmore College Department of Biology faculty for undergraduate work that showed exceptional promise for future societal impact

NSF Research Experience for Undergraduates Fellowship (May 2014)
Selected by Dr. Jane Disney at Mount Desert Island Biological Laboratories and supported by NSF to conduct summer research on seagrass ecology at Mount Desert Island Biological Labs

GRANTS

Rackham International Travel Grant (February 2020)
Received \$990 to attend the 36th Annual Great Lakes Mycological Meetings in London, Ontario

North American Mycoflora Project Sequencing Grant (May 2018)
Received funding to sequence the DNA of 60 fungal specimens as part of the “University of Wisconsin Arboretum Mycoflora” North American Mycoflora Project

Agroecology Program Professional Development Grant (April 2018)
Received \$300 to attend the 2018 AFHVS/ASFS conference in Madison, WI

Center for Integrated Agricultural Systems Grant (April 2018)
Received \$2,500 to conduct research on the topic of continuous living cover, specifically the community composition of arbuscular mycorrhizal fungi associating with switchgrass

University of Wisconsin Arboretum Mycoflora Grant (January 2018)
Received \$500 from the University of Wisconsin Arboretum to buy equipment and supplies for the “University of Wisconsin Arboretum Mycoflora” North American Mycoflora Project

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Microbiology Graduate Student Instructor (BIO 207) | University of Michigan (Fall and Winter Terms, 2019–2020)

- Each term, taught two three-hour lab sections on principles and techniques of microbiology to approximately 20 undergraduate students per section
- Independently developed curriculum pertaining to introductory and supplementary background information as well as weekly lab assignments

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

James Lab: Mycology | University of Michigan (September 2019–Present)

- Analyzing geographic and taxonomic variation in gyromitrin toxin content in morels across Michigan
- Rediscovering the tardigrade parasite *Sorochytrium milnesiophthora* and sequencing its genome for phylogenomic analyses of basal clades of fungi

Jackson Lab: Grassland Ecology & Biofuel Cropping Sustainability | Great Lakes Bioenergy Research Center at UW–Madison, WI (June 2017–August 2019)

- Evaluated the effects of nitrogen amendment on the community composition of arbuscular mycorrhizal fungi associating with switchgrass using PacBio metabarcoding

Pfister Lab: Fungal Taxonomy | Harvard University, MA

National Park Service | Boston Harbor Islands, Boston, MA (January–May 2017)

- Collected sporocarps from the Boston Harbor Islands for a fungal biodiversity inventory; conducted fieldwork on rough terrain and in inclement weather
- Identified collections using genetic barcoding, discovered new species and species newly reported for North America, and published peer-reviewed manuscript

Pierce Lab: Insect Phylogeny & Physiology | Harvard University, MA (July–October 2016)

- Extracted DNA from the phytotelmata (fluid) of pitcher plants to characterize interspecific differences in arthropod communities
- Exposed acacia plants (*Vachellia drepanolobium*) to the volatiles of symbiotic and parasitic ants and quantified phenotypic responses of plant

Vallen Lab: Cell Biology | Swarthmore College, PA (September–December 2014; June–September 2015)

- Developed electroporation as a technique to genetically transform the coral bleaching model organism *Aiptasia pallida*, the brown anemone
- Conducted chemotaxis assays for the attraction of larval anemones to sugars to understand how larval cnidarians detect and uptake algal symbionts; used 3D printing technology to make testing arenas

Disney Lab: Seagrass Ecology and Conservation; Williams Lab: Population Genetics | MDI Biological Laboratories, Bar Harbor, ME (June–August 2014)

- Measured the tensile strength of seagrass under various growth regimens to determine the role of dissolved silica in plant health and disease prevention
- Analyzed population genetics of invasive European green crab (*Carcinus maenas*) to determine history of introduction

PUBLICATIONS

Song, J., Liang, J.-F., Mehrabi-Koushki, M., Krisai-Greilhuber, I., Ali, B., Kumar Bhatt, V., ... **Dirks, A. C.**, ... Haelewaters, D. (2019). Fungal Systematics and Evolution: FUSE 5. *Sydowia*, 71, 141–245. <https://doi.org/10.12905/0380.sydowia71-2019-0141>

Haelewaters, D., **Dirks, A. C.**, Kappler, L. A., Mitchell, J. K., Quijada, L., Vandegrift, R., Buyck, B., Pfister, D. H. (2018). A preliminary checklist of fungi at the Boston Harbor Islands. *Northeastern Naturalist*, 25(9), 45–76.

Badger, M., **Dirks, A. C.**, Farrell, A., Charabati, J., Morrill, K., Disney, J., Williams, L. M. (2015). Population genetics and abundance of the invasive European green crab (*Carcinus maenas*) and its role in eelgrass (*Zostera marina*) loss around Mount Desert Island. *MDIBL Bulletin*, 54, 19–20.

PRESENTATIONS

Dirks, A. C. “Michigan Mycoflora Project: Citizen science for fungal research and conservation”. Michigan Mushroom Hunters Club Winter Meeting, Oral Presentation, February 15, 2020.

Dirks, A. C. “Morphology and molecular phylogeny reveal taxonomic problems in the *Athelia epiphylla* complex (Atheliales)”. MSA 2019, Poster Presentation, August 11, 2019.

Dirks, A. C. “Effects of nitrogen amendment on arbuscular mycorrhizal fungi in association with switchgrass”. UW–Madison Agroecology Master’s Program Public Thesis Talk, Oral Presentation, August 5, 2019.

Dirks, A. C. “Conserving fungi: Who cares?” Wisconsin Mycological Society Winter Meeting, Oral Presentation, March 28, 2019.

Dirks, A. C. “The ubiquitous unseen: Past and present exposition of the UW–Madison Arboretum mycoflora”. UW Arboretum Annual Research Symposium, Oral Presentation, February 14, 2019.

Dirks, A. C., Grace, J., Landis, G. “Grazing Wisconsin’s public lands: A win–win for farmers and grassland habitat?” Green Lands Blue Waters Conference, Oral Presentation, November 2017.

Dirks, A. C., Vallen, E. "Developing electroporation as a research tool in the sea anemone: *Aiptasia pallida*." Swarthmore College Student Research Poster Session, Poster Presentation, September 2015.

Dirks, A. C., Badger, M., Farrell, A., Thompson, C., Kidder, G., Disney, J. "Silicon and seagrass: A neglected nutrient essential for viable eelgrass." MDIBL REU Symposium, Oral Presentation, July 2014.

PROFESSIONAL SOCIETIES

AAS: American Association for the Advancement of Science (2019–Present)

MSA: Mycological Society of America (2018–Present)

SERVICE AND OUTREACH

President of Madison Mycological Society | Madison, WI (January 2018–August 2019)

- Founded Madison’s first amateur mycological society, acquired non–profit status, led Board of Directors consisting of seven volunteer community members, and grew mailing list audience to over 300 people

- Led forays every other week with a typical attendance of about 6-10 and up to two dozen people; organized monthly local mycologist lecture series

UW-Madison Arboretum Work Party Leader | UW-Madison Arboretum, Madison, WI
(September 2017-August 2019)

- Restored sensitive, native ecosystems while teaching and managing teams of approximately 10 volunteers in monthly restoration work parties