

Alden Dirks

I am completing my third year as a PhD student at University of Michigan (UM) in the lab of Professor Tim James. I began studying the fungi from my local grocery store in 2015. Since then, I have fallen in love with these fascinating organisms in all their complexity and diversity. After college, I joined the lab of Professor Don Pfister to conduct a fungal biodiversity inventory of the Boston Harbor Islands. Following that, I moved to Madison, WI, where I started the Madison Mycological Society and researched the effects of nitrogen amendment on communities of *arbuscular mycorrhizal* fungi associating with switchgrass, a perennial biofuel crop. Now at UM, I am researching the genes and evolution of the *gyromitrin mycotoxin* in lorchel mushrooms (*Gyromitra* spp.). In the future, I hope to work as an educator and researcher of fungal biology and/or become a mushroom farmer.