

RESEARCH INTERESTS

I study the evolution of fungal-algal symbioses, known as lichens. For my current project, I apply bioinformatics combined with wet-lab techniques to try to understand how microbial partners communicate in the symbiotic setting and what each of them contributes to the system.

ACADEMIC APPOINTMENTS

- 2025– **PostDoctoral Fellow**, Hanna Johannesson Lab, Stockholm University (Sweden)
- 2022–2025 **PostDoctoral Scientist**, Nick Talbot Group, The Sainsbury Laboratory (Norwich, UK)

EDUCATION

- 2022
University of Alberta
Edmonton AB, Canada
PhD in Systematics and Evolution
GPA 3.9 (4.0 max).
Advisor: Toby Spribille
Thesis title: How Lichens Work: Functional Aspects of Symbiosis Viewed through Metagenomics and other Culture-Free Methods
- 2017
St. Petersburg University
St. Petersburg, Russia
MSc in Biology
GPA 4.0 (4.0 max). *Diploma cum laude*
Advisor: Irina Stepanchikova
Thesis title: Globally endangered lichen *Erioderma pedicellatum* in Kamchatka
- 2015
St. Petersburg University
St. Petersburg, Russia
BSc in Biology
GPA 3.9 (4.0 max). *Diploma cum laude*
Advisor: Irina Stepanchikova
Thesis title: Lichens epiphytic on aspen in the old growth forests of the Valday upland

AWARDS AND FUNDING (TOTAL ~\$168,000)

Fellowships and Scholarships:

- 2025–2027 Wenner-Gren Fellowship for international postdocs (Stockholm University, \$66,000)
- 2021–2022 Alberta Graduate Excellence Scholarship (UAlberta, \$12,000)
- 2020–2021 Alberta Innovates Graduate Student Scholarship (UAlberta, \$62,000)
- 2020 Alberta Graduate Excellence Scholarship (UAlberta, \$12,000)
- 2013–2017 Increased State Scholarship for Academic Excellence (St.PU, \$10,000)

Awards:

- 2023 University of Alberta nominee for the CAGS/ProQuest Distinguished Dissertation Award
- 2022 Andrew Stewart Memorial Graduate Prize (\$5,000)
- 2020 Lionel Cinq-Mars Award for the best oral presentation (\$500)
- 2018 St. Petersburg Naturalist Society Award for the best MSc thesis (\$100)

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS (see the full list at the end of the document)

1. **Tagirdzhanova G.**, Scharnagl K., ... & Talbot N. J. 2025. Complexity of the lichen symbiosis revealed by metagenome and transcriptome analysis of *Xanthoria parietina*. *Current Biology* 35(4): 799–817.
2. **Tagirdzhanova G.**, Saary P., ... & Spribille T. 2024. Microbial occurrence and symbiont detection in a global sample of lichen metagenomes. *PLOS Biology* 22(11): e3002862.
3. **Tagirdzhanova G.**, Saary P., ..., Spribille T. 2021. Predicted input of uncultured fungal symbionts to a lichen symbiosis from metagenome-assembled genomes. *Genome Biology and Evolution* 13(4): evab047.
4. **Tagirdzhanova G.**, Scharnagl K., Yan X., Talbot N. J. 2023. Genomic analysis of *Coccomyxa viridis*, a common low-abundance alga associated with lichen symbioses. *Scientific Reports* 13: 21285.

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

2023–2024	Data Science (MSc course), The Sainsbury Laboratory. Co-Instructor
2018	Biology of the Fungi (BSc course), UAlberta. Teaching assistant
2018, 2019	Introduction to Biodiversity (BSc course), UAlberta. Teaching assistant
2014, 2016	Fungi, Lichens, and Algae (BSc course), St. Petersburg University. Teaching assistant

Guest lectures:

2021	Introduction to research in ecology and evolutionary biology (Stanford University)
2020	Biology of the Fungi (UAlberta), Introduction to Graph Theory (UAlberta)
2019	Biology of the Fungi (UAlberta), Microbial Diversity and Evolution (UAlberta), Experimental Biology (UAlberta)

SUPERVISING AND MENTORING

2024–2025	Jasper Raistrick (BSc student, University of East Anglia): 1-year work placement , TSL
2024	Benjamin Adjei (MSc student, The Sainsbury Laboratory): MSc thesis project , TSL. Benjamin received Royal Society of Biology Master's Accreditation Top Project Award
2023	Flurin Lauchli (MSc student, University of Zurich): 3-month research internship , TSL
2020–2021	Samantha Pedersen (BSc student, UAlberta): two term research projects and a summer internship (12 months in total), UAlberta
2020–2023	Mentor, Speaker at The Science Mentors, a career mentorship program for STEM undergraduate students. Mentored four students

INVITED TALKS

2025	Seminar series of Institute for Plant Sciences (University of Cologne, Germany)
2023	Seminar series of Oslo Mycology Group (University of Oslo, Norway)
2022	Seminar series of Royal Botanic Gardens in Kew (UK)
2022	Seminar series of the Finnish Museum of Natural History (University of Helsinki, Finland)
2021	Students Mycology Colloquium (Mycological Society of America)

SELECTED CONFERENCES

2025	17th European Conference on Fungal Genetics (oral presentation)
2024	12th International Mycological Congress (invited oral presentation)
2024	Gordon Research Conference on Cellular and Molecular Fungal Biology (oral presentation)
2023	EMBL Symposium: The cellular mechanics of symbiosis (oral presentation)
2022	Canadian Fungal Research Network Meeting (oral presentation)
2021	IX Symposium of the International Association for Lichenology (oral presentation)
2021	Canadian Fungal Research Network Meeting (oral presentation)
2021	The British Lichen Society Annual General Meeting (oral presentation)
2020	Canadian Botanical Association Virtual Meeting (oral presentation)
2019	30th Fungal Genetics Conference (poster presentation)
2018	International Symbiosis Society Congress (poster presentation)
2016	VIII Symposium of the International Association for Lichenology (poster presentation)
2014	XIX Symposium of the Baltic Mycologists and Lichenologists (poster presentation)

BOARD MEMBERSHIP AND SERVICE

2025–2026	Guest co-editor for a special issue, <i>The Lichenologist</i>
2023–2024	Postdoc Committee , The Sainsbury Laboratory, <i>Member</i>
2021–2022	CanFunNet 2022 Conference Organizing Committee , <i>Member</i>
2020–2021	Department Council , UAlberta Department of Biological Sciences, <i>Member</i>
2020–2021	Working Group for Respect, Equity, Accountability and Departmental Culture , UAlberta Department of Biological Sciences, <i>Member</i>
2019–2021	Biology Graduate Students' Association UAlberta : <i>President</i> (2020–2021), <i>Co-organizer</i> of R.E. Peter Biology Conference, <i>Member</i> of Equity Diversity Inclusion Committee
2019–	Journal peer reviewer for <i>Nature Communications</i> , <i>New Phytologist</i> , <i>eLife</i> , <i>FEMS Microbiology Ecology</i> , <i>Microbial Ecology</i> , <i>IMA Fungus</i> , <i>The Lichenologist</i> , <i>Symbiosis</i> , <i>American Journal of Botany</i>

ADDITIONAL EDUCATION

2025	Leadership & Management Skills course for Postdocs. HfP Consulting
2023	Instructor Training Program with The Carpentries . Covers evidence-based teaching practices applied to the teaching of data science and programming
2017	Data Analysis online certificate program, St. Petersburg Academic University

SCIENCE COMMUNICATION

2019	Member of Research Zone Science Communication Program , Telus World of Science
2019	Invited speaker at The Great Alberta Mushroom Foray
2018	Lichen expert at the Tombstone Park BioBlitz in Yukon, Canada
2017	Presented at the workshop “Lichen Revival III: Rediscovering Macrolichens in the Canadian Rockies”
2017	Co-teacher at the field seminar for students and NGO volunteers “Nature Conservation and biologically valuable forests”
2011–2017	Co-organizer and judge for biological conferences and contests for high school students (Student conference “Future Scientists” 2011, 2017; Biology Olympiad 2011–2017; Youth Biology Tournament 2011–2013).

NATURE CONSERVATION EFFORTS

2017	Contributed to project of Valhalla Wilderness Society dedicated to the protection of Inland Temperate Rainforests in British Columbia
2012–2017	Participated in research leading to establishment of several Nature Reserves in Russia, Participated in monitoring of endangered species

PUBLICATIONS

I. Preprints

1. **Tagirdzhanova G.**, Raistrick J., Talbot N. J. 2025. Chromosome-level genome assembly of the photobiont alga *Trebouxia* sp. 'A48' from *Xanthoria parietina* provides new insight into the lichen symbiosis. *bioRxiv*. doi.org/10.1101/2025.05.01.651714.

II. Peer-reviewed Papers

1. **Tagirdzhanova G.**, Scharnagl K., Sahu N., ... & Talbot N. J. 2025. Complexity of the lichen symbiosis revealed by metagenome and transcriptome analysis of *Xanthoria parietina*. *Current Biology* 35(4): 799–817. doi.org/10.1016/j.cub.2024.12.041.
2. Allen C.C.G., Díaz-Escandón D., DeLong-Duhon S., **Tagirdzhanova G.**, ... & Spribille T. 2025. Massive gene loss in the fungus *Sporothrix epigloea* accompanied a shift to life in a glucuronoxylomannan-based gel matrix. *Genome Biology and Evolution* 17(2): evaf015.

3. **Tagirdzhanova G.**, Saary P., Cameron E.S., ... & Spribille T. 2024. Microbial occurrence and symbiont detection in a global sample of lichen metagenomes. *PLOS Biology* 22(11): e3002862. doi.org/10.1371/journal.pbio.3002862.
4. **Tagirdzhanova G.**, Scharnagl K., Yan X., Talbot N. J. 2023. Genomic analysis of *Coccomyxa viridis*, a common low-abundance alga associated with lichen symbioses. *Scientific Reports* 13: 21285. doi.org/10.1038/s41598-023-48637-w.
5. Scharnagl K., **Tagirdzhanova G.**, Talbot N. J. 2023. The coming golden age for lichen biology. *Current Biology* 33(11): PR512–R518. doi.org/10.1016/j.cub.2023.03.054.
6. Díaz-Escandón D., **Tagirdzhanova G.**, Vanderpool D., ... & Spribille T. 2022. Genome-level analyses resolve an ancient lineage of symbiotic ascomycetes. *Current Biology* 32: 1–10. doi.org/10.1016/j.cub.2022.11.014.
7. Resl P., Bujold A. R., **Tagirdzhanova G.**, ... & Spribille T. 2022. Large differences in carbohydrate degradation and transport potential in the genomes of lichen fungal symbionts. *Nature Communications* 13: 2634 doi.org/10.1038/s41467-022-30218-6.
8. Spribille T., Resl P., Stanton D., **Tagirdzhanova G.** 2022. Evolutionary biology of lichen symbioses. *New Phytologist* 234(5): 1566–1582. doi.org/10.1111/nph.18048.
9. **Tagirdzhanova G.**, McCutcheon J. P., Spribille T. 2021. Lichen fungi do not depend on the alga for ATP production: a comment on Pogoda et al. (2018). *Molecular Ecology* 30(17): 4155–4159 doi.org/10.1111/mec.16010.
10. **Tagirdzhanova G.**, Saary P., Tingley J., Diaz Escandon D., Abbott W., Finn R., Spribille T. 2021. Predicted input of uncultured fungal symbionts to a lichen symbiosis from metagenome-assembled genomes. *Genome Biology and Evolution* 13(4): evab047, doi.org/10.1093/gbe/evab047.
11. Spribille T., **Tagirdzhanova G.**, Goyette S., Tuovinen V., Case R., Zandberg W. 2020. 3D biofilms: in search of the polysaccharides holding together lichen symbioses. *FEMS Microbiology Letters* 367(5): p.fnaa023.
12. **Tagirdzhanova G.**, Stepanchikova I., Himmelbrant D., Vyatkina M., Dyomina A., Dirksen V., Scheidegger C. 2019. Distribution and assessment of the conservation status of *Erioderma pedicellatum* in Asia. *Lichenologist* 51(6): 575–585.
13. Himmelbrant D. E., Stepanchikova I. S., Motiejūnaitė J., Kuznetsova E. S., **Tagirdzhanova G.**, Frolov I. V. 2019. New records of lichens and allied fungi from the Leningrad Region, Russia. X. *Folia Cryptogamica Estonica* 56: 23–29.
14. Motiejūnaitė J., Chesnokov S. V., Czarnota P., ..., **Tagirdzhanova G.**, Thell A., Stepanchikova, I. 2016. Ninety-One Species of Lichens and Allied Fungi New to Latvia with a List of Additional Records from Kurzeme. *Herzogia* 29(1): 143–163.
15. Himmelbrant D. E., Stepanchikova I. S., **Tagirdzhanova G. M.** 2016. The lichens and allied fungi of the Oranienbaumsky Prospective Protected Area (St. Petersburg). *Novitates systematicae plantarum non vascularum* 50: 210–230.

16. Himelbrant D. E., Stepanchikova I. S., Motiejūnaitė J., Vondrak J., **Tagirdzhanova G. M.**, Gagarina L. V., Kuznetsova E. S. 2015. New records of lichens and allied fungi from the Leningrad Region, Russia. VI. *Folia Cryptogamica Estonica* 52: 21–28.
17. Stepanchikova I. S., Himelbrant D. E., Dyomina A. V., **Tagirdzhanova G. M.** 2015. The lichens and allied fungi of the Zapadny Kotlin protected area and its vicinities (Saint Petersburg). *Novitates systematicae plantarum non vascularum* 49: 265–281.
18. **Tagirdzhanova G. M.**, Kataeva O. A., Stepanchikova I. S. 2014. New lichen records from the Novgorod Region, Russia. *Folia Cryptogamica Estonica* 51: 103–107.
19. Himelbrant D. E., Motiejūnaitė J., Stepanchikova I. S., **Tagirdzhanova G. M.** 2014. New records of lichens and allied fungi from the Leningrad Region, Russia. V. *Folia Cryptogamica Estonica* 51: 49–55.
20. Stepanchikova I. S., **Tagirdzhanova G. M.**, Himelbrant D. E. 2013. The lichens and allied fungi of the Smorodinka River valley (Leningrad Region). *Novitates systematicae plantarum non vascularum* 47: 262–278.

III. Book Chapters

1. **Tagirdzhanova G.** 2022. Boreal Felt Lichen, an endangered cyanolichen *Erioderma pedicellatum*. In: DiPaolo D., Villella J. (Eds.). *Imperiled: The Encyclopedia of Conservation*.
2. **Tagirdzhanova G. M.** 2018. *Lobaria scrobiculata*. In Geltman D. (Ed.). *Red Data Book of Leningrad Region: Plants*. P. 519–520.
3. **Tagirdzhanova G. M.** 2018. *Lobaria pulmonaria*. In Geltman D. (Ed.). *Red Data Book of Leningrad Region: Plants*. P. 781–782.