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Slime Molds
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Gary A. Laursen (1942-2026)

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Abstract: A mycologist who was involved in studies of the dictyostelids and myxomycetes associated with high-latitude regions of the world passed away early this year. Gary Laursen worked with the author in both the Arctic and the subantarctic, including on expeditions to Macquarie Island, Campbell Island, and the Auckland Islands.

Keywords: Arctic, dictyostelids, myxomycetes, subantarctic

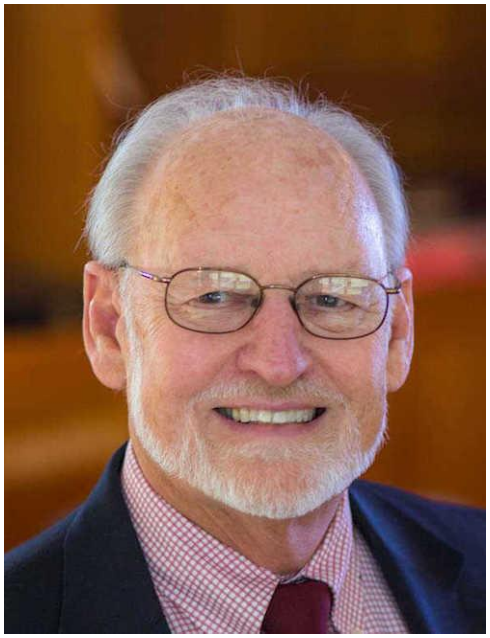

Figure 1. Dr. Gary A. Laursen (photo courtesy of the University of Alaska).

Gary Laursen (Fig. 1) earned his Ph.D. from Virginia Tech, where he studied soil fungi in Arctic tundra. His major professor was Dr. Orson K. Miller. I first met Gary when he was a teaching assistant in Miller's mycology course that I was taking. He left Virginia Tech before I completed my Ph.D., and I had no direct contact with Gary until the late 1980's when I reached out to him to express my interest in coming to Alaska. I knew that he was at the University of Alaska, and I wanted to extend my studies of

myxomycetes to the Arctic. I eventually went to Alaska during the summer of 1989 and began a collaboration with Gary that ultimately resulted in extensive work in the Arctic during the summers of 1991, 1992, 1993, 1994, 1995, and 1998. In 1995, Gary and I extended our work to the subantarctic when we spent the period of mid-January to early May at the Australian Antarctic Division research station on Macquarie Island, one of the most remote places in the world. This led to expeditions to subantarctic Campbell Island in 2000 and to the Auckland Islands in 2006.

Gary's primary interest was in the basidiomycetes, especially the agarics. However, while working with me he was an active collaborator on studies that yielded a number of papers on dictyostelids and myxomycetes, and he co-described species in both groups (the myxomycete *Diderma boreale* and the dictyostelids *Dictyostelium ammophilum* and *Heterostelium boreale*). In his field guide entitled "Common Interior Alaska Cryptogams: Fungi, Lichenicolous Fungi, Lichenized Fungi, Slime Molds, Mosses, and Liverworts" and published by the University of Alaska Press in 2010, there is a section on myxomycetes.

A list of some of his publications in scientific journals is given below.

Novozhilov YK, Schnittler M, Stephenson SL. 1998. The myxomycetes of Russian subarctic and arctic areas. Mikol Fitopatol. 32(1): 18-29.

Novozhilov YK, Stephenson SL, Overking M, Landolt JC, Laursen GA. 2007. Studies of Frostfire myxomycetes including the description of a new species of *Diderma*. Mycol Prog. 6: 45-51.

Stephenson SL, Laursen GA. 1998. Myxomycetes from Alaska. Nova Hedwigia 66: 425-434.

Stephenson SL, Laursen GA, Seppelt RD. 2007. Myxomycetes of subantarctic Macquarie Island. Aust J Bot. 55: 439-449.

Stephenson SL, Laursen GA, Landolt JC, Seppelt RD. 1998. *Dictyostelium mucoroides* from subantarctic Macquarie Island. Mycologia 90: 368-371.

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Stephenson SL, Novozhilov YK, Shchepin ON, Laursen GA, Leontyev DV, Schnittler M. 2022. Myxomycetes of Alaska: species diversity and distribution. Nova Hedwigia 115: 519-534.