

PhD student position in plant-insect ecology in the Wetzel Lab

The Wetzel Lab at Michigan State University is accepting applications from prospective PhD students. We study the ecology of plants, insect herbivores, and predators. A major goal of our work is understanding how environmental variability and biological diversity affect species interactions. We're fascinated by variability--from how organisms cope with extreme variability to how changing levels of variability affect the natural world. We do this using field research, lab and greenhouse experiments, statistics, math modeling, synthesis, meta-analysis, plant chemistry, ecophysiology, and global collaboration. Please see <https://wetzellab.com/> for more information.

The student will be expected to build an independent ecological research program. Their program could expand upon a current project in the lab or develop a novel line of inquiry related to the ecology of plants and insects in a variable world. Students can join the Wetzel Lab through the Ecology, Evolution, and Behavior Program, the Department of Entomology, and/or the Department of Integrative Biology. Start date could be May-August 2021.

Qualifications

Applicants should have a bachelor's degree in ecology, biology, entomology, plant biology, environmental science, or a related field. We look for strong communication skills and quantitative skills or an interest in learning them. Prior research in ecology and plant-insect interactions is not required. We strive to assess candidates holistically.

Support

Students in the lab receive a stipend, tuition, and travel and research support. This support comes through a mix of research assistantships, teaching assistantships, departmental funding, and university fellowships. Students are also encouraged to seek external fellowships through the NSF, USDA, and other sources. Students in the lab have access to extensive equipment and supplies for research in the field, greenhouse, and lab, Chromebook computers they can take home or to the field, and shared desktop computers in the lab.

Plant-insect ecology at Michigan State University

MSU is an exciting place to study plant-insect ecology. The university has a large and dynamic community of scientists working on cutting-edge questions about plants and insects in natural and agricultural ecosystems. Potential collaborators and colleagues can be found in the departments of Entomology, Plant Biology, Biochemistry and Molecular Biology, and Integrative Biology, and across the Ecology, Evolution, and Behavior Program. The university has an extensive greenhouse facility. We work at field sites on campus (bikeable), at the MSU Kellogg Bio Station nearby (would require driver's license), and around the world (www.herbvar.org).

How to apply

Prospective students interested in applying should explore the lab website (<https://wetzellab.com>) and email wcwetzell@msu.edu with the following:

- 0) "Prospective student" in subject line of email
- 1) Brief cover letter describing accomplishments, research interests, and career goals
- 2) CV
- 3) Unofficial transcripts
- 4) Sample of scientific writing (e.g., published paper, manuscript in preparation, MS or undergraduate thesis, research paper or essay from a class)
- 5) Names and email addresses for 3 references

Applicants who email by October 16th will be given preference. This will allow time for us to discuss potential projects before applications are due to the graduate school on December 1st. I will schedule digital meetings with top candidates to discuss the opportunity and potential projects in more detail.

Michigan State University is an Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action employer, and actively encourages applications and/or nominations of women, persons of color, veterans, and persons with disabilities. The Wetzel Lab strives to be safe space for diversity in STEM. I welcome applications from students from groups that have been traditionally excluded from academia. E-mail questions to Will Wetzel (wcwetzell@msu.edu).