

The Coastal Waters Consortium Presents: Scientist Spotlight



Allison Snider

What is your educational background?

I graduated with my BS degree from Central Michigan University in 2015 and I am currently pursuing my MS at Louisiana State University.

What inspired you to become a scientist?

Growing up, I spent most of my free time around the lake in my back yard and dreaming of exploring oceans and scooping up animals from the depths to study them closely. In college, I realized that my curiosity was a natural fit for scientific research and I got involved with research on the molecular ecology of benthic invertebrates. This introduction to genetic work defined my real research interests and led me to my current work.

Can you describe what you enjoy the most about conducting scientific research?

I love being outdoors and having the opportunity to appreciate the beauty of Seaside Sparrows up close, but the best part about scientific research is when the results come together. It's very humbling and exciting when the data you worked so hard to collect and analyze starts to provide answers. It feels like solving a puzzle that really allows you to understand a piece of the world around you.

What is your role as a scientist for CWC?

As a graduate student, I work with Dr. Sabrina Taylor and Dr. Phil Stouffer. Our lab has a variety of projects studying how oil has impacted the terrestrial ecosystem of the Louisiana saltmarshes. My project focuses on Seaside Sparrows, a resident of the saltmarsh, but I also help to collect a range of data such as soil samples and insect samples.

Can you summarize your oil spill research and describe any surprising findings you have come across?

I am studying how oil impacted the saltmarsh ecosystem by focusing on the Seaside Sparrow diet. These birds feed on invertebrates that were likely affected by oil, so I will be comparing bird diets on oiled and unoiled sites to evaluate if, and how, they differ. This will give us a unique look at how this piece of the food web may have been altered by the presence of oil.



The Coastal Waters Consortium's mission is to assess the chemical evolution, biological degradation, and environmental stresses of petroleum and dispersant within Gulf of Mexico coastal and shelf ecosystems.