

The Coastal Waters Consortium Presents:

# Scientist Spotlight



## Sara Wendt

### What is your educational background?

I have a degree in Wildlife Ecology from the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point and a minor in biology. I am currently looking for a graduate position.

### What inspired you to become a scientist?

I have always been drawn to animals and the outdoors. I took it upon myself to explore natural areas in my home city instead of going to the mall or watching TV. My interest in animals, coupled with my drive for knowledge and learning, led me to research and wildlife ecology. Plus, science was always my best subject in school!

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

I love having the opportunity to answer my own questions. I have a continual thirst for knowledge and research allows me to discover, learn, and expand my mental horizons. Making new discoveries are exciting, and we have the opportunities and resources to inform the world about how the environment works, to help create sustainable practices from the knowledge we have, or even to create new medicines. Research allows for endless opportunities for learning and helping society.

### What is your role as a scientist for CWC?

I work as a research associate in a lab at Louisiana State University that collects data on the lingering effects of the 2010 Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill. When we aren't in the field, I assist with projects and work around the lab. My current project examines the symmetry of horse fly wings to determine if oil had detrimental developmental effects.

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

My lab at LSU is made up of a handful of graduate students who are investigating various pieces of our research and the residual effects from the oil. We study Marsh Rice Rats and Seaside Sparrows - their habitat, food sources, and reproductive success. Additionally, the project is looking into the presence of hantaviruses in the rats.

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.

