

The Coastal Waters Consortium Presents:

Scientist Spotlight

Maggie Shaw



What is your role as a scientist for CWC?

As a research technician at Rutgers University, I work with Drs. Able, Jensen, and López-Duarte to assess oil spill influences on marsh fish communities and food webs. In the field, I use multiple sampling gears (trawl, seine, gill net) to look at species composition and abundance at both oiled and unoiled sites. In the laboratory, my work has primarily focused on assessing fish stomach contents to determine diet.

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

In 2016, during my first visit to our southern Louisiana sampling sites, I expected to see differences between sites that had been exposed to oil in 2010 and those that had not been exposed to oil. I was surprised that no oil was visible on the marsh surface and that there was an abundance of fish and invertebrates across all of our sampling sites.

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.

What is your educational background?

I received a BS in Marine Sciences from Rider University in 2011. At Rider, I worked under Dr. Paul Jivoff, studying blue crab behavior and reproduction. I also participated in an internship at Mote Marine Laboratory and Aquarium in Sarasota, FL, where I learned husbandry and conservation techniques for lined and pygmy seahorses.

What inspired you to become a scientist?

I have always loved being outside, getting muddy, and observing wildlife. My science teachers throughout both high school and college seemed especially excited about their course material, so it was hard not to get excited along with them.

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

Every research opportunity in which I have participated has been an incredible learning experience that has helped me grow as a scientist and a person. My research experiences have introduced me to people from many different backgrounds, each of whom has brought a new enthusiasm and excitement to the work I get to do each day. From field and laboratory techniques to species interactions and behaviors, I have never completed a research project without feeling as though I've gained a better understanding of the world around me.

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