

COOSA



RIVERKEEPER®



Issue 10: Summer 2016
Photo © 2016 T. Minton

Intern Kayla Minton collects a sample for Swim Guide from Coldwater Creek Park

REEL NEWS



The largemouth bass (*Micropterus salmoides*) isn't just the state freshwater fish of Alabama, it's also the focus of our third annual game fish shirt! These beauties are available at CoosaRiver.org/Largemouth for \$25 including shipping. Get one today and wear your support for the Coosa!

The shirt is designed by artist and Coosa Riverkeeper Board member Richie Gudzan of Paddle Out. The inclusion of the Largemouth Bass in our shirt lineup rounds out the Coosa-native black bass family (largemouths, spotted and redeye). **Largemouth can grow the largest of the three**, and for two of the three species the state record comes from the Coosa Valley.

The state record largemouth weighing in at 16 lbs 8 oz came from a pond that is part of the Kelly Creek system of Lay Lake while the state record redeye bass of 3 lbs 2 oz came from Choccolocco Creek of Logan Martin.

On that note, our fifth annual Coosa Canoe & Kayak Fishing Tournament wrapped up in June at the Coosa Classic in Wetumpka where **Jared Atwell** was crowned the **Big Wills Outfitters Angler of the Year** in a close race.

Thanks to our Sponsors:

- YUM Lures
- Big Wills Outfitters
- REBEL Lures
- Duckett Fishing
- Alabama Kayaking
- Greater Gadsden Area Tourism
- Paddle Out
- Bending Branches
- Orion Coolers
- Patagonia
- YakAttack
- Saltlife Optics
- Coosa Outdoor Center
- Back Forty Beer Co.



GET THE SKINNY BEFORE YOU DIP!

We're near the end of the second summer of Swim Guide! Our Swim Guide program has grown substantially since last year. In addition to some equipment upgrades, we've tripled the number of interns working on the project and greatly increased our outreach (including radio ads!).

You can view all Swim Guide results at CoosaRiver.org/SwimGuide or sign up to **receive text alerts about water quality by texting "SWIMGUIDE" to 844-83!** Join nearly 500 subscribers today so you can make sure to "Get the Skinny Before You Dip!"

This summer, our interns Hazeza, Karli and Kayla monitored **18 popular swimmin' holes for 18 weeks.** Swim Guide results are posted every Friday. The tests focus on the level of *E. coli*, which we use as an indicator of the amount of fecal contamination in the water. We're also monitoring other important water quality characteristics like temperature, pH, turbidity (*how muddy the water is*), and dissolved oxygen levels.

A generous **3-year collaborative grant from the Community Foundation of Greater Birmingham** funds a portion of the project and enables Coosa Riverkeeper to provide training and lab usage to our sister group Cahaba Riverkeeper (See their results at CahabaRiverkeeper.org/SwimGuide).

We've seen very few alerts on the Coosa this year compared to last year. The big factor here is rainfall. We're behind on rainfall this year and the lack of rain means bacteria counts are, on average, lower as less nasty things get washed downstream. Of course, the lack of rainfall is also bad - lower flows in our streams and river is not good for aquatic life, with lower dissolved oxygen and higher water temperatures.

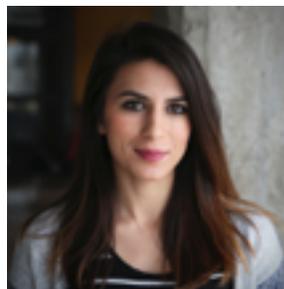
2016 SWIM GUIDE SEASON:

- Expanded monitoring to 18 sites for 18 weeks
- Over 500 subscribers to the text message alert system
- Utilized 3 interns to cover over 5,000 square miles
- Issued 10+ water quality alerts
- Crowdfunded \$5,500 for new equipment
- Increased outreach to radio ads and rack cards at marinas
- Work featured in all local newspapers and TV stations
- Third largest Swim Guide program in the world!



Karli Riley, Lead Swim Guide Intern

Karli is a senior at Berry College where she will graduate with her Environmental Science degree with a minor in Business. Karli's life has always been centered on the water, from being born in Clearwater, Florida to being a lifeguard and teaching swim lessons for over 3 years. At Berry, she is working on the reconstruction of past fire behavior through charcoal analysis to determine past weather patterns in two high elevation lakes in Western Colorado. Karli is especially interested in water quality, and is a strong advocate for conserving the Coosa River to ensure it is drinkable, fishable and swimmable for the community. In her free time, she enjoys running and drinking yummy coffee.



Hazeza Kochi, Coosa River Swim Guide Intern

Hazeza is pursuing an MPH in Environmental Health and Toxicology at the University of Alabama at Birmingham, where she also received her bachelor's degree in Public Health. When she's not going to class, she helps people manage their chronic health conditions as a Health Advisor for a local company called Pack Health. Her favorite hobby is exploring the beauty of Alabama's outdoors by hiking, cycling, and canoeing. Ensuring water quality so that her community continues to feel safe, confident, and happy on the Coosa River is Hazeza's passion and mission.



Kayla Minton, Coosa River Swim Guide Intern

Kayla is a recent graduate of The University of Alabama with a degree in Biology. Originally from Lincoln, Alabama Kayla grew up on the Coosa River spending most of her summer days enjoying Logan Martin Lake. The Coosa River has always been a major part of her life, and for this reason she has a passion for conserving and protecting it. In her free time, Kayla enjoys hiking on Cheaha Mountain, fishing, and kayaking.

Share our posts on Facebook or Twitter about Swim Guide! You can also contribute by donating at CoosaRiver.org/Donate.

Riverkeeper to Sue Oxford for Sewage

On August 3rd, we filed a **Notice of Intent to Sue the Oxford Water Works and Sewer Board** for a range of violations of environmental laws in their operation of Oxford's Tull C. Allen Wastewater Treatment Plant. The Clean Water Act requires we provide Oxford 60 days notice of our intention to file **the lawsuit which is aimed at protecting Choccolocco Creek where it discharges.**



For each of the past six months beginning in February, our staff Riverkeeper has collected a sample from the sewer plant. On nearly every occasion, the Riverkeeper documented violations of the Plant's permit. Though the facility is allowed to discharge as much as 2,507 col/100mL *E. coli* at any given time in the winter, samples collected by the **Riverkeeper detected *E. coli* levels as high as 308,000 col/100mL and chlorine concentrations double what is allowed.**

How did we get here?

When we launched Swim Guide in May 2015, we chose Choccolocco Creek near Oxford as one of our test sites because it's a popular place for recreation. **The test results were shocking.** We posted several water quality alerts for alarmingly high levels of *E. coli* that were detected even in the absence of any rainfall. In response, we launched the Choccolocco Creek Monitoring Project in June 2015. This project showed that on average that month ***E. coli* levels downstream of the Oxford Plant were more than double that of upstream of the Plant.**

Following that lead, our staff Riverkeeper began collecting samples directly from the discharge pipe of the sewer plant. The results were truly shocking, with **one *E. coli* sample registering over 240 times the permitted limit.**

After obtaining Oxford's own monitoring documents via an Open Records Act request, our attorneys at Southern Environmental Law Center discovered **Oxford routinely failed to sample at the required monitoring frequency.** Though required to sample for some pollutants such as *E. coli* three times per week, their research showed Oxford often only sampled once or twice per week. According to inspection reports from state regulators, **the quality of Oxford's monitoring data is suspect.**

This case exemplifies the importance of citizen science and citizen action. Support this work at CoosaRiver.org/Donate.



Left: The discharge pipe from the Oxford Plant into Choccolocco Creek
Above: The Oxford Plant discharge (foreground) stains the creek a dark color.

MORE COOSA RIVEKEEPER INTERNS



Marilyn Rowell, Outreach & Program Intern

Marilyn is a junior from Birmingham Southern College pursuing a degree in Urban Environmental Studies and minoring in Sociology. Originally from Virginia Beach, Virginia she grew up swimming, fishing, and boating on the St. Johns River in Florida. Spending most of her time on the water led her to realize how essential a clean river is to a community. She is very excited to begin advocating and promoting the Coosa River. She is a competitive swimmer and hopes to one day swim with sharks... she really loves sharks!



Brenna Hoppe, Fish Guide Intern

Brenna is a senior in UAB School of Public Health, and is concentrating in Environmental Health Sciences as well as Biology and Spanish. After graduation next Spring, she hopes to go on to receive her Master's degree in Public Health and continue to help keep the great outdoors of Alabama a safe and healthy place for everyone to enjoy. Brenna was born and raised in Hoover, and spent many of her childhood days exploring the Cahaba River and camping with her family. Outside of school she is a server and bartender and tries to see as much live music as possible.



Sandhya Krishna, Outreach & Program Intern

Sandhya is a sophomore pursuing a double major in Public Health and Biology at the University of Alabama at Birmingham. She is passionate about wildlife conservation rehabilitation and plans on studying veterinary sciences in the future. Sandhya is a member of the University Honors Program, where she is the Sustainability Chair and works closely with UAB Recycling and the UAB community garden. Hiking, painting, practicing yoga, and spending time outdoors are a few things that she enjoys doing in her free time. Sandhya is excited to get the opportunity to learn more about the non-profit sector and advocate for the river and the environment surrounding it.



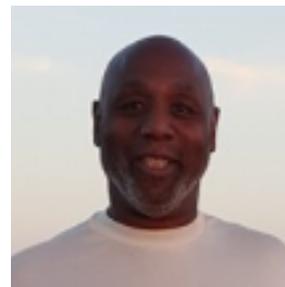
Robert Dozier, Marketing and Media Intern

Robert is a junior at Birmingham-Southern College pursuing a Bachelor of Science degree in Business Administration with a minor in Visual Art. Originally from Jacksonville, FL he grew up on the St. John's River and it has always had a special place in his heart. He says, "I have an incredible amount of pride in my own river and I would love to help instill that same pride in others by promoting and restoring the Coosa River!" He is also a captain of the Birmingham-Southern men's lacrosse team as well as a member of Greek life. In his spare time he enjoys eating Chipotle and watching YouTube videos.

WELCOME TO THE BOARD!



Kristin Trowbridge lives in Birmingham as an entrepreneur, activist, homemaker and volunteer. An advocate for clean air, clean water, safe food and healthy bodies. As an adult, she returns to the Coosa with a newfound appreciation for its origins, its beauty and a passion to preserve what remains for her children and future generations. She lived for many years on Lake Mitchell where she still vacations.



Lawrence Myatt considers himself "a jack of all trades and a master of none." His favorite activity since childhood has been exploring the outdoors with the sun on his face. He has been married 21 years to his wife, Jacqueline, and together they have a beautiful son, Joshua. His passion in this life is to assist others in any way possible to achieve a beautiful life.— plus he's an amazing gluten-free baker!